

# EQUALIZING X DISTORT

Volume 14, Issue 01

January 2014

**CREATIVE ZERO** were a hardcore band from Peterborough that formed in ... 1981?

Joel: Yep, 1981.

And soon moved to Toronto to become part of the vibrant Toronto hardcore scene. Their song "Aggravated Assault" appeared in the film *Not Dead Yet*; They recorded fifteen songs in 1984 with Brian Taylor at Accusonic. We are joined tonight by ... some might know the junglist DJ James Zero, also known as James St. Bass.

James Zero: For the DJing stuff.

**We know you as James Zero. You started off CIUT's the original "Hardrive" show?**

JZ: I did: 1990 to '99 I guess. I was on the way out, and you were on the way in from next door: same year.

**I was, yeah, but we're here to talk to you about playing guitar in CREATIVE ZERO.**

JZ: That came first.

**And Joel ... Wasson, is that right?**

J: Right.

**Who also played drums in CREATIVE ZERO. Welcome to the show, both of you, and thank you for coming in so late. What was the song "Jocks Fuck Off" about?**

J: To be a punk rocker in that day and age could have been a dangerous thing walking down the street, things that were hurled at you as you walked down the street. And it was totally improvised, pretty well every time that song was done.

**So it didn't have set lyrics.**

J: Well, there were kind of things: what would a jock yell at you, a strange-looking fellow walking down the street, and your life would be in danger if you had the wrong haircut in the wrong neighbourhood at the wrong time.

**I wanted to ask you if DEAD KENNEDYS were an inspiration for the band, because when I think of that song, at least the title, "Jocks Fuck Off," I think of "Nazi Punks Fuck Off," and I think of "Jock-O-Rama": two DEAD KENNEDYS songs pull together the ideas in one.**

J: Yeah, I don't think those songs were around when we made it up. They



could have been, I'm not really sure. Yeah, we liked DEAD KENNEDYS for sure; they were an awesome band at that particular time.

JZ: Now that I think about it: you've seen the DEAD KENNEDYS' set list that I brought in from their show at the Concert Hall, but prior to that, I would have bought the *In God We Trust* e.p., the DEAD KENNEDYS e.p., I think I bought that at Moondance Records in Peterborough, to tell you the truth, so I think "Nazi Punks Fuck Off" was on that, wasn't it? Or was it earlier?

**Um, it was earlier, I think it was earlier. [It was not.]**

J: But DEAD KENNEDYS as an influence: absolutely. There's a lot in CREATIVE ZERO where we talk about intolerance and the master race and the industrial complex of the U.S.A. and all those sort of themes.

JZ: At that time, at that legendary show at the Concert Hall at 888 Yonge—  
YOUNG LIONS

opened it, didn't they? I think YOUNG LIONS opened it—that was the biggest hardcore band there was at that point, until BLACK FLAG rolled through a while later and some of the U.K. bands coming over. I don't know of a lot of other bands playing that style of music that played a venue as big as the Concert Hall. And it was full: that was a big, big show. I was a U. of T. student at the time, the T.A. for the Political Science course I had was at that show. We talked about it in class.

**And you were telling me that you used to live just on the other side of the common room ...**

JZ: Yeah, it's beautiful to be back in Hart House after twenty-eight, almost thirty years. Yeah, I lived in residence here at U. of T., Wilson, in the basement, which became—it was the only room in the wing of the residence that I lived in the basement—it became a punk-rock flophouse for that year, I'm telling you: people would come from Peterborough and York ...

**And Ottawa: RAW SEWAGE.**

JZ: ... and Ottawa, RAW SEWAGE. I got rid of the bed frame, there was two mattresses, they went out on the floor, and there would be no less than six people, usually more, passed out there every weekend, because people would come in to see shows, to go see punk-rock shows, and inevitably they'd



be crashing back at my place. It was a punk-rock flophouse. J: When I came to find a place in Toronto, I crashed at your place.

JZ: And Johnny McLean and Graham and all those people because they were ... some people were at U. of T. Mississauga campus, some people were at York, and so I had the downtown flophouse. I had the most room because I was in the basement, and people would come and go as they

please, and they certainly did. But for a lot of those early hardcore shows, there ended up being a lot of people back at my place, for sure.

**I wanted to ask you a bit more about "Jocks Fuck Off": the music and the guitar parts in it remind me a lot of JFA. Were JFA an influence on the band?**

JZ: Well, we definitely saw, I saw JFA, that was a very very funny ...

**Didn't they play Quoc Te or something like that?**

JZ: They played the Quoc Te. They played two dates, and this was a *Reuben Kincaid Productions* - I don't know if you know the background of that ...

**No, I don't: tell me about it. I know Don LeBeuf: he managed HYPE and did all those shows.**

JZ: One of the better things—and this was a little later, actually, once CREATIVE ZERO had been there and been around—we managed to become very good friends, very quickly and very easily, with similar-style bands, so those would include MICROEDGE and HYPE and APB. And so, when it came to JFA, that show was gonna go on, and then it wasn't gonna go on because I think it was gonna be a Jil Jil Productions and then at the last minute sort of found out that the show wasn't gonna happen, and a bunch of people freaked out and said, "Nonono, this show has to happen: we have to have JFA in here." So a bunch of literally just musicians and people put up the money that was needed to be put up front to put on the show at the Turning Point, and that's what happened. And they were freaking awesome, it was so good ...

**They were from Phoenix, so that was a long way for them ...**

JZ: Yeah, and they toured—I remember



this very clearly—they toured in sort of a big school bus, a full-sized school bus with curtains in the windows and blacked-out, but they had all their gear and literally this old school bus was the touring vehicle, and the next night, after the Turning Point show, they did another show that was just cobbled together very quickly down at the Quoc Te in Kensington Market. But the JFA show at the Turning

Point was one of the better ones, I think most of the best shows that I've ever seen of this style of music were either at the Turning Point or Larry's for me.

J: A few at the Upper Lip.

JZ: Well, one in particular. A few at the Upper Lip; not a lot, though, that wasn't a regular venue.

**No, I didn't see a lot of shows happening there. One of the bands that you mentioned was a band called MICROEDGE, and in that song in particular, I think I got this wrong, but I thought I heard a lyric that referenced MICROEDGE, saying, "So you think you're hardcore, eh?" which is a song that MICROEDGE wrote.**

JZ: Yeah, no, there would have been no connection, because we would have been playing that song before we even met MICROEDGE.

J: They liked that song.

JZ: Yeah, they would have liked that song. Before I forget: "Jocks Fuck Off" is dedicated to Dave Buchanan, drummer for MICROEDGE, he loves that song—he thinks it's our best song, it's our number-one

# EQUALIZING DISTORT

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 01

EQUALIZING-X-DISTORT MONTHLY is an extension of the weekly radio show heard on CIUT 89.5 FM every Sunday nights from 10:00pm 'til midnight (Participants: Rob Ferraz, D'Arcy Rix-Hayes, and Stephe Perry).

The show dedicates itself to the underground hardcore punk scene. There is a particular emphasis on international releases in the developing straight edge, crust, Killed By Death, power violence, oi, and peace punk which means we play bands like Stay Hungry, Passiv Dodshjalp, XL Capris, Skuff, Bishops Green, and Lost Cherrees.

There is a weekly demo feature (paying homage to the cassette format), weekly event listings, and a monthly top 10 retrospective look at new releases.

**Equalizing-X-Distort**

CIUT 89.5 FM

Sundays 10:00 pm - midnight

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## CIUT 89.5 FM - "Equalizing Distort" Top 10 Hardcore Releases for January 2014

Band	Title	Format	Label
1. COKE BUST	"Confined"	12"	Grave Mistake
2. OBLITERATION	"War is our Destiny"	ep	Beach Impediment
3. ABUSE	s/t	LP	To Live A Lie
4. BUMBKLAATT	"Luctus"	LP	Prank
5. PARANOID	"Hardcore Addict"	ep	Phobia / Rawmantic Disasters
6. IMPALERS / VAASKA	split	ep	Beach Impediment
7. CRUNKY KIDS	"A joke called life"	CD	Hibachi
8. TV FREAKS	"Two"	LP	Schizophrenic
9. GENERACION SUICIDA	"Mil Amores"	ep	Mata la Musica
10. JUNGBLUTH	"Part Ache"	LP	Halo of Flies

Equalizing Distort can be heard every Sunday night on CIUT 89.5 FM at 10:00 pm. The top 10 countdown can be heard in its entirety, complete with previews of the picks and analysis on the previous month in hardcore, on the last Sunday of the month.



hit, so this goes out to Hammer Skates, all the skaters, and all the MICROEDGE fans for sure.

J: You look at that sort of thing, but we would have said, "So you think you're hardcore, huh?" And in that particular one I think he goes, "So, you think you're art rock, huh?"

JZ: I think they just grooved on the comedy of it more than anything because we were a very irreverent band: nothing too serious for us.

J: There was a lot of, like, the themes of his lyrics had the

message of what we were about and what we believed in and that sort of thing, but, yeah, most of the time, when we do songs like "Skank and Shout," and we'd do "Metal Health is Driving You Mad" ...

JZ: The covers ...

J: ... the covers, we had our tongue firmly in cheek and having a good time. And we were potheads, so we were giggling most of the time.

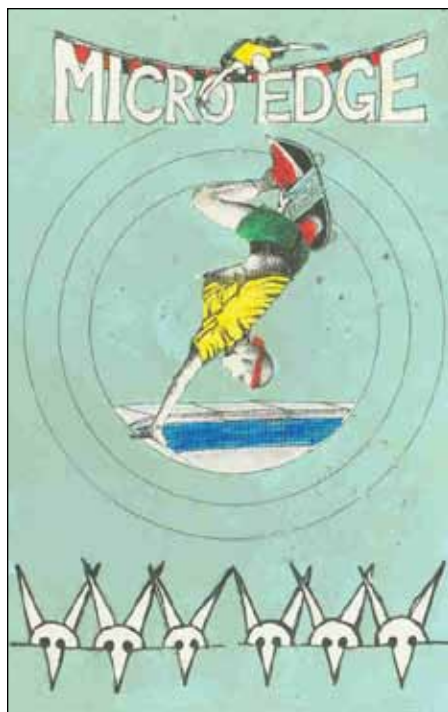
JZ: Not much has changed.

**Whereabouts were CREATIVE ZERO from?**

J: Well, I was in a band and we sort of went sideways as most bands end up doing, and Greg used to hang around with these—we came from Peterborough, and we had this "band house" with this band called KIDZ, and Greg was sort of like ...

JZ: The KIDZ were killer: the KIDZ kicked butt. That was a great band, first time I saw this guy drum, I was like, "I wanna be in a band with this drummer."

J: ... so, Greg, the bass player, thought a similar thing, so when we broke up, he had never played before, he was just a guy who hung around the band, and he goes, "I'll be the bass player, I'll form a band," so then me and him decided to form a band. Hardcore was coming about, and we played a lot of punk rock, and KIDZ was sort of a punk-rock band, and I could play really fast, and things just got faster and faster, and we met this guy Paul, Paul McNamney, Greg met him, and he was this sixteen-year-old kid who had all these poems that he'd written down, and said, "Do you want to be the singer?" And he said, "I've never sang,"



and I go, "Yeah, but you've got words, that's all it's about, you've just got to shout out what you believe in," and he was, like, "I'm into that," he was into punk rock, so he became the singer. Without ever hearing him sing, we just looked at his poems ...

**You were telling me a bit of the story about meeting him: how did you come to meet him? He stood out, I guess.**

J: See, that was the guitar player ... we met Paul, Paul was just a basketball high-school student

with a whole view of the world. The guitar player before James joined the band—this guy, we were like, "We need a guitar player, we can't just be bass, drums, and singing"—well, we could be, but we figured it'd be nice to have a bit more of a racket, and this

guy walked in, like I said. We said, "Wow, this guy must be into what we're into, just from the way he looked. And we go, 'Do you play punk rock? Are you into punk rock?'" "As a matter of fact, yeah." "Do you play guitar?" And he goes, "Not really, but I'll have a go of it." He was like this art-school student guy, and Greg had rented this farm south of Peterborough, and we jammed there, and we just basically got together: Paul with his poems, Greg with his bass—and he called it sub-guitar, because he like just strummed chords, you'll hear it in the song ...

JZ: Fuzz-box bass.

J: ... fuzz-box bass, he'd go, "I play sub-guitar, I don't play bass." And Paul just screaming out his vocals over top, and this guy was really creative, and he put together the music parts, and my job as the drummer was, "O.K., we do that four times, and then that goes eight times," and I would

remember it.

**You would create the structure.**

JZ: Arrangements.

J: I would remember it from practice to practice: "O.K., when that roll happens: that's four."

**How long did you practice at this farm?**

J: It was kind of like two to three months, and we had these songs, and we went to this place, and there were these heavy-metal battle of the bands, and we show up, and we go, "We're a band!" and they thought, "Well, this is cool, this is a battle of the bands, and this band's just showing up and wants to be there." And we got up and we played, and there were bands doing this [mimics Robert Plant's pinched-nut histrionics from "Immigrant Song"]: the whole heavy metal, they were wearing spandex and the big hair ..

JZ: Metal. Before that, metal.

J: Hair metal. It was not even hair metal, it was just bad '70's metal.

JZ: Sebastian Bach used to go to KIDZ shows, from SKID ROW. He was younger.

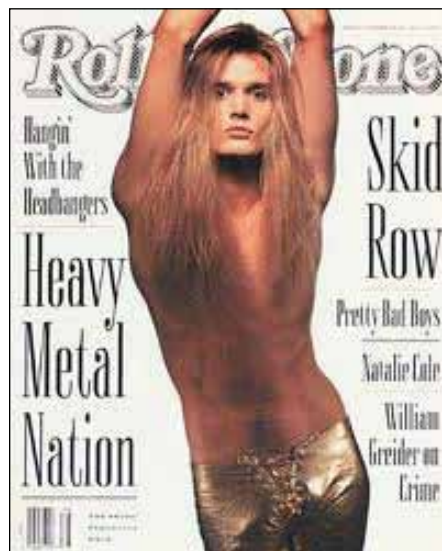
**Is he from here?**

JZ: Peterborough ...

**I didn't know that. I had no idea.**

JZ: ... Sebastian Bach's from Peterborough.

J: That poster you've got from the Playpen: Sebastian Bach used to go there, it was around grade nine.



JZ: So I went there, I went to this place called the Playpen. I had a high-school band called DOXY and we just did TEENAGE HEAD and RAMONES covers and DAVID BOWIE and just whatever we could to play. We hooked up with another Peterborough band at the time called STROBIC X, and they had actually put a self-produced record out, so they

came and played our high school, and I think we went to Peterborough and played with them once, and then once I started meeting more Peterborough punks, if you will, or people who were into that music there, I found out about this place called the Playpen, and I went to see this band called the KIDZ, and I saw this guy, Joel, on drums play and sing this VIBRATORS' song called "Petrol," and I'd just never seen anybody play the drums so fast; plus, he hit all the vocals in the lyric as well, and I was

like, "I've gotta get in a band with this guy." **Yeah, that would be difficult, for sure.**

J: When we said, "We're a Peterborough band, there's, like, two places to play every three years, we should probably move to Toronto and be able to play: let's go to the big city and be a band," right? So, I was moving up there to go to university at York, and I convinced Paul's parents that he'd be under good stewardship living with me as a sixteen-year-old boy in a house with myself, a nineteen-year-old boy, and Greg moved up there, and the guitar player wasn't going: he was going off to Thunder Bay, I think he was from, I think he was going back to there, so I went, "Oh yeah, James, James: he knows it. We've got this show at Peter Robinson [college at Trent University]." So I went up with a cassette and hung out with him for a weekend, and he learned all the songs and played his first show after about a weekend.

JZ: Really not knowing the songs.

**James, you weren't from Peterborough.**

JZ: No, I was from a much smaller community, a town called Campbellford, where I had my high-school band.

**I had a good friend from Campbellford, but I don't think that most people know necessarily where Campbellford is.**

JZ: I don't imagine they could, unless they're skaters, and then they've been to the Cow Ramp, and they'll know exactly where it is. And now there's a skatepark there and all. It's between the two bigger towns of Peterborough and Belleville, so Cobourg area, it's up there nestled in the Trent hills.

J: Out Marmora way.

JZ: ... Marmora, Hastings, Havelock: this is all good country roots for punk rock. And you'd be surprised: when you come from a small community like that, you find people really, really quickly ...

**Like-minded people, yeah.**

JZ: ... yeah, you'd have spiky hair, I mean you're talking the late '70s early '80s here, you wore a skinny tie, you had pointy-toed winkle-picker shoes or something, you know, 'cause it was all happening at once—punk and new wave and rockabilly—and it came so fast and furious, from '77 to '78 to '79, I'm in junior high

school, and then '80-'81 I'm in senior high school, and by that time it's post-punk, and THE CLASH are playing stadiums, right? I would say, what happened was my high-school band played a summer show in 1982, we knew it was our farewell show, we recorded it, so I have that somewhere on cassette, and then a whole bunch of us came to Toronto, and you were there too, so the two Peterborough punks came to see THE CLASH at Exhibition Stadium with BLACK UHURU opening up, and there was, I don't know, a contingent of like fifteen of us all went together. I don't know how you can get fifteen people to go to a concert together, but when you're young, you can do that. We certainly never could do it now.

J: Well, it was THE CLASH, it was the cultural event at that particular point.

JZ: So that was I think Labour Day weekend, so I came up to the show, had to go back after the show that weekend or something, and then I moved up here to Toronto right over there in residence at U. of T.

**Yeah, that show was at the end of the summer.**

JZ: Yeah, CNE: end of August, beginning of September, literally right after Labour Day weekend. Then I moved here with a guitar, an amp, a suitcase of clothes, and a student loan, and all I wanted to do was go to punk-rock shows. That's all I did, too.

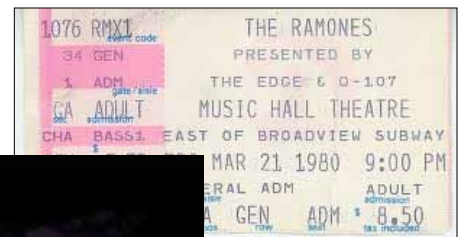
J: I think about two weeks later, THE RAMONES played at The Concert Hall.

JZ: Yes. That whole fall, it was either the Concert Hall or Larry's or the Turning Point, there was always something on, always something to do.

**That was my excuse to go to university, too: I was purely there for the punk rock.**

JZ: Absolutely: go to university to see the bands. I didn't care what I was studying. I mean, I kind of got into it eventually, but it was all about living in downtown Toronto just to see the shows that you

couldn't see, but coming up as a teenager, I would actually see a little tiny column in the *Toronto Star*, you'd see who was playing at Larry's and the Head Space, and you'd see like all the bands that you were idolizing



and trying to get their records on import, whatever you could get from Moondance or Sam the Record Man in Peterborough wasn't

a lot. But they would come through, and you met people, and they turned me onto Star Records in Hamilton and Oshawa, and they had everything, so it was a matter of record collecting, and you would only meet half a dozen people who liked these same type of records, so you just started a band: that's what you do.

**Yeah yeah, sure. Before we leave Peterborough, because we're starting to get into Toronto, I wanted to ask you where you would play shows in Peterborough: you mentioned this place called the Playpen ...**

JZ: Art Space, Art Space. The Playpen was ... it was just rented space, wasn't it?

J: We rented this place and built a stage, and we called it the Playpen 'cause we were kids, and we'd have shows there, so we kind of did that ...

JZ: Totally DIY

J: ... do it yourself sort of thing 'cause no one would allow you play, you'd have to rent a hall somewhere to put on a show was the only place you could play; battle of the bands ...

**But was the space like a warehouse space?**

JZ: Yeah, it was upstairs.

J: It was like an old office building, on the second or third floor, and it was wide open, there were no walls in there, so you basically throw up a stage and invite a bunch of people in until they kick you out of there.

JZ: Wasn't the P.A. and the guitar amp the same thing?

J: Yeah, pretty much.

**How many shows took place?**

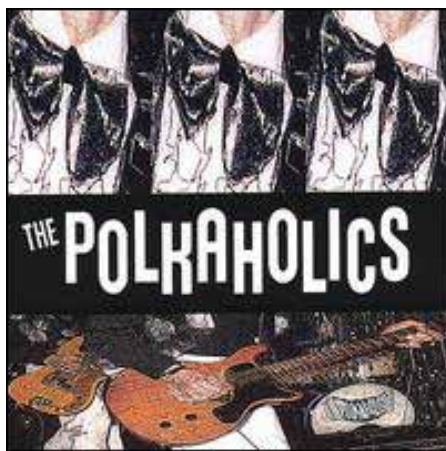
J: We opened that up and ran it for a summer. People would come there until people got wise from the establishment ...

JZ: The Peterborough edition of the Crash 'n' Burn.

J: You could play Art Space, and you could play Trent University, you had a place called Peter Robinson College, they would put bands on.







JZ: Art Space was a gallery, and Peter Robinson College was kind of the hip art college that wasn't out at the main Trent campus: it was downtown. And so there was a band just come out of university, people hanging out at Peter Robinson College called DANGER UXB, and I managed to get my high-school band to open up for them in Peterborough, which to us was like the Big Time, like we were really movin' and shakin' it then.

J: And I think we opened for the POLKAHOLICS, the show that you played.

JZ: Yeah, and the POLKAHOLICS came and played this Art Space place because, again, like-minded people into something a little bit different—this band DANGER UXB covered some CLASH songs but also NEIL YOUNG—they were sort of political ...

J: "Four dead in Ohio," and then they'd go into a CLASH song ...

JZ: ... an anti-war, peace-activist band.

**"Danger UXB" was like a punk song from somebody, I'm trying to think of who ... that name sounds familiar ... I'm trying to think of ... [DIRECT ACTION]**

JZ: Yeah, "unexploded bomb" and that was very much their aesthetic; they were proper musicians ... they were properly playing ... they had all kinds of anti-war and activist songs, some were originals, some were covers, and then we came up there and just slashed out the noise, the fast punk rock, but they were totally cool with it: they were thrilled to have us

there, but we were more than thrilled to be able to play.

J: And we actually—a funny sort of side there—was that we'd gone there, and we'd met James once before and convinced him to let us borrow his instruments and play in between their set and their next set. So the KIDZ got to play the same set, we said, "Go for it: get a show."

J: "Please, man, we want to play. You know us, right?" Which doesn't really happen at all anymore.

JZ: No.

**You did a song called "U.K. Thump."**

J: Yes, that's a KIDZ song.

**Is there a Peterborough reference in that song?**

J: Well, the thing about it was, it's actually kind of slanderous. The song was written about the riots in Britain: "the kids are kicking up the air, the smell of petrol in the air"—which is kind of ironic, because it just happened again last summer, right?

JZ: But this would have been the earlier riots ...

J: ... that happened in the early '80s, I believe it was, but Paul on the spur of the moment decided to change all the lyrics about the guy who wrote the song [laughs]. So it was actually kind of slanderous; in fact, you'll hear at the end of it James kind of going, "You sure you don't wanna take that one again?" And he's like, "I made up all the lyrics on the spot." We're both thinking, "yeah, that's really kind of slanderous."

JZ: I never knew what the songs were about: I was just playing as fast as I could.

J: The song was called "U.K. Thump" but it was about the riots in Britain but the actual words that you hear is about the guy Shawn Moore who lives in Peterborough and about his wanting to become a pirate. That's how

that band broke up: he didn't want to be in a punk-rock band anymore; he wanted to go off and become a pirate.

**O.K.**

J: "So drive me to the border, I'm gonna go down to the States and steal a boat and become a pirate."

**Here's that song.**

J: We would just like to say that we're all afraid of Shawn Moore, and we mean no harm to what we said in that particular song.

JZ: That was purely



Paul improvising. He had a great sense of humour that guy, too, actually ... such jokes.

J: Shawn had broken a window and stolen his bass, right, but he never did become a pirate: he went back and lived in Peterborough and didn't do much else besides that.

**O.K. Where does the name CREATIVE ZERO come from?**

JZ: Now that's a good one: I don't have a clue.

J: We were sitting around the farm, having smoked some inspiration and trying to think of a name for the band, and someone goes, just, "Creative Zero, man, I got nothin'" and "That's it! We got nothin': we're just brain dead."

JZ: And that became a song.

**So "Brain Dead" could almost be like your theme song.**

J: Well, that's more like ... "Brain Dead" I wrote that one. That one's kind of about people where they kind of "I believe in this, I watch this same thing since I've been fifteen." And, "Hey, what about this?" "Oh, I don't think for myself, the media tells me this." "Well, what do you think about this?" "What's *Dallas*: I hear J.R. got shot?" "What?"

**Actually, that's what I thought the song was about.**

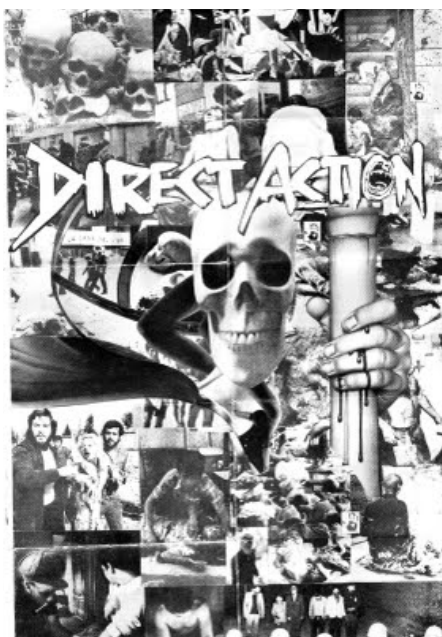
J: That's what it's about. It's about people who close their mind and they're like basically, "Everything I'm about by the age of fifteen, and I will never change; I will listen to that same music, and I will believe whatever I'm fed on television."

**Yeah, 'cause you could either think it's about zombies ...**

J: You could.

**... but when we were talking about "Brain Dead" people were talking about how people were blind obedient, really.**

J: Yes, that has the theme there, and it comes in a few of the other songs you're gonna



hear.

**What was the scene like back in 1981?**

J: "Scene"?

JZ: In Peterborough? We *were* the scene. [laughs]

**I'm talking about coming to Toronto ...**

JZ: Oh, awesome.

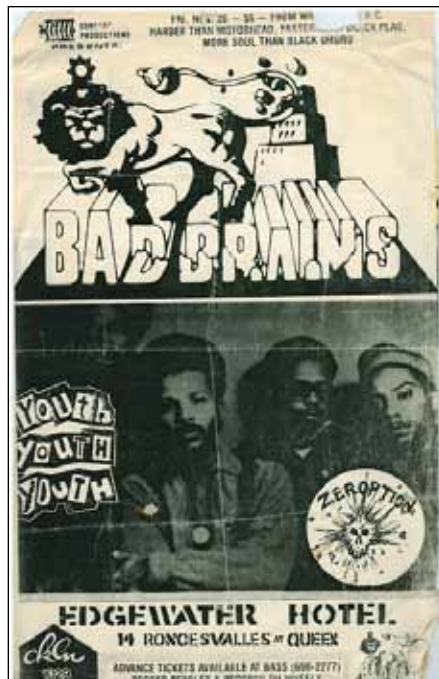
**... what were your first impressions of the hardcore scene in Toronto?**

J: It scared me.

JZ: It was a little ... it could be a little intimidating, for sure, I don't know: I saw so many different shows at so many places and I tried to get to know people as quickly as possible, YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH of course were established, YOUNG LIONS were established, and so you'd just go to those shows, for sure, and then you just started to meet the other bands that opened up the shows. I mean, it was within the first year, so winter '82 and into '83 that I saw the BAD BRAINS with YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH and ZEROPTION opening, so I got to meet those bands ...

**Those are heavy hitters, really.**

JZ: ... and the most incredibly heavy shows: winter of '83, you've got the flyer here that I brought in with THE EXPLOITED and APB at 100 Bond Street. That was a big show: I just remember it being so crowded and so hot, it was just absolutely packed out for that one. So you'd get—there was two things that happened, in my memory, such as it is—you'd have these sort of local shows at the Turning Point, you'd have one out-of-towner, maybe a U.S. out-of-towner, but if you had a U.K. band coming through, or a bigger band like the DEAD KENNEDYS, then it was Jamil, Jam Jam or Jil Jil was involved, et cetera, so it became not unlike—it reminds me, here I am at U. of T., so I flip back and forth between these sense memories, not unlike the rave parties, too, in the early '90s, which I was involved with heavily. And so if you had a U.K. headliner DJ, you'd get several thousand people out, and you'd put on a show with local DJs and you'd get a few hundred people out. So if you did a local type show at the Turning Point, you may get fifty to a hundred people, but if you had a name band who had records out and that were touring across the country, then you'd get a few hundred people out, and these would be the shows that would be at Larry's or, again, at 100 Bond. There were other bands at 100 Bond ... ANGELIC



UPSTARTS I saw at El Mocambo, so there was some shows at the El Mocambo ... this was a time, too, at U. of T., right, the year before that I got here—I arrived here September '82—but that summer, I think—it would have been summer or spring before—YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH had actually played in the basement of the UC dining hall: YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH had a show there.

**No way.**

JZ: Absolutely, 'cause the graffiti was scratched in the wall right above my residence room.

J: Something I do remember about the scene was that it was kind of changing, like the earlier punk rock was a harder edged, more nihilistic, whereas you started to get the skater guys and a lot of people that were a lot more like ...

**You're talking about '82?**

J: Yeah, where you're starting to see, "We're going to think for ourselves, and we're

world's coming to an end." There was a bit of that, still, and it was less about—there was always the guys and it was a fashion thing more for them, and then there were the other ones and just, "this is the whole new way of hardcore thinking, just do it yourself." And it was actually very friendly and inclusive and easy-to-get-to-know-people scene.

JZ: Things had changed so much between, say, 1978-'79 and 1981-'82: it was only a couple of years, but in music, it was enormous. As far as the U.K. was concerned, punk was long dead and gone, and the hot things coming out of the U.K. were the Bat Cave scene and all those Goth bands, SEX, uh, ALIEN SEX FIEND and all of that early Bat Cave stuff. I remember those shows at Larry's: the girls always used to like to go to those Goth shows for some reason.

J: Skater punks.

JZ: And then the punk rock thing came up, and it started to be things like BLACK FLAG and CIRCLE JERKS and BAD BRAINS coming through town, and then the local bands that wanted to open for those ones, and that's how we got to meet MICROEDGE and APB ...

J: But they were very positive, DEAD END and all those guys ...

JZ: Very positive, all of them: everybody was super friendly and super nice ...

J: ... and very supportive. There was always, "Maybe those skinheads are gonna show up and they'll be violent," but the vast majority was, "Let's go have a good time, we'll mosh ..."

**That's the intimidation part you're talking about.**

JZ: Yeah, but you'd only get that at certain shows. Like, I saw DISCHARGE on Yonge Street at Yonge and Gerrard, what was a theatre at the time (now it's a jewellery store or something), DISCHARGE played a show in there and that was stupid violent with all kinds of people getting beaten up.

That and THE EXPLOITED show was a little rough at 100 Bond Street, but on the other hand, what I like to maintain is that whether it was DEAD KENNEDYS at the Concert Hall or some of these other shows at



more positive, and we're more like thinking about the world and what we can do, and we don't have to buy what's going on," and less about "Aw, everything sucks and the

Larry's, if it was a Garys show, for instance, you knew Tank was gonna be there. And if you don't know who Tank is, he was an enormous, great, big, super-gentle bear of



a bouncer, just an absolutely huge guy, so you got to be friends with Tank, you made sure he knew who you were, so if somebody started any shit with you, you just got Tank's attention, and it was done. So you always made friends with Tank and you had no problems. That's how I was always able to constantly run up on the stage and snatch all the set lists that I brought in here tonight for you, the punk-rock collection there.

**That's how you got the DEAD KENNEDYS one, right?**

JZ: Absolutely.

J: But by and large it was a very cool, supportive scene where people were just going out and loving the music, and occasionally you'd feel the weird sort of vibe come in when certain sort of groups showed up, but by and large if it was a small show they wouldn't be coming.

JZ: I never saw any problems much at Larry's, and the only time I ever saw any violence at the Turning Point was self-inflicted, but we can get to that story ... it wasn't us.

J: BFG's first show, I remember watching that, just the funniest thing ever in the world was Steve Goof coming off the stage and moshing around the floor with Ken Huff, and he jumps up on Ken Huff, and Ken Huff had this big belt on—and earned my respect, he used to wrestle in high school, right? and in university—just grabbed him and body slammed him on the floor. Steve Goof wakes up, just staggers around, gets back up on stage, tries to sing, but you could just tell he was obviously dazed from being slammed on the floor. It was funny!

JZ: If you hadn't been to a Turning Point show, and you have no idea what the Turning Point is, you're lost for this type of thing, but if you've ever been to a Turning Point show, it was such a dump, and it was so casual and so relaxed with the old couple that ran the bar at the back. They didn't care, as long as people bought beer and didn't really cause any trouble: don't stand out on the street, because that brings the cops, and you don't want the cops showing up—because, let's face it, there were probably lots of people in there that weren't of age ...

J: And they didn't understand what was going on.

JZ: ... they would just stand back there at the bar and do their thing, and this complete musical mayhem would go on at the front, and everybody was pretty much allowed to do their thing.

J: It was funny, too: you'd just watch, later on, watching mosh pits, which've become common at big concerts, but there you saw it, the embryonic kind of start of mosh pits ...



JZ: Absolutely: that was the first place I saw moshing, for sure. Well, DEAD KENNEDYS.

J: ... people would go diving off stages, but when you went down, people picked you up, and it was fun; you dove, and there were bodies going everywhere and people going everywhere, and drum sets getting bashed back into you and your cymbals fall over and you pick it back up and just keep going.

JZ: At the Turning Point, of course, you had your stage, and then this area in front of the stage, and then there were this big semi-circular banquettes, so there was kind of a cage, a death match almost between the end of where people were sitting and where the musicians were playing on stage, and it was a reasonable stage, three-and-a-half, four feet high. So there was that general area that would be trouble, and people used to launch off the banquettes and try to, like, Jesus-walk over your heads right to the stage and back. Good times.

J: And I had a perfect seat sitting at the back on the drum stool.

JZ: Not that you can see it, but that's another story, but in the *Not Dead Yet* video, CREATIVE ZERO, "Aggravated Assault," you can see that I've fallen off the stage because at one point I'm up there playing and at the next point I'm much, much lower. I've actually hurled myself off the stage in the middle of that song one way or another: that was a common occurrence for me on guitar, so ...

**What I was also trying to get at was there was also a lot of politics in the hardcore scene at the time, not politics, but people**

**were certainly active in terms of ...**

J: There was a lot more message coming into the music as opposed to ... in your lyrics, you talked about what you perceived to be the world at that particular time and what you perceived to be the United States and the industrial complex that was going on there. And it's funny, it's ironic, it's very similar to what's going on now, and it was like "Oh, buh buh buh, buh buh," and, yeah, we were talking about that in '82, '83, '84.

**One thing in particular: I was interviewing the folks from Start Dancing about a month ago now, and they were sharing something I didn't realize that was happening was the Ku Klux Klan were trying to get a chapter in Toronto.**

JZ: Yeah, there was that, there was also the New York Guardian Angels, that was a thing happening, I showed you this thing I brought in was an anti-Falwell demonstration. So I started going to some of those things 'cause I very quickly got into different sort of political communities while at university, that's what it's for, I like to think, thank goodness, whatever's left of it. So there was things like that, there was huge anti-nuclear demonstrations, there was a group that was called ACT at the time that was "against cruise testing," and there'd be ten-thousand people up and down University Avenue for that, because it was Jerry Falwell, Ronald Reagan, Moral Majority, the beginning of parental advisory on music ...

**The Cold War was still in full effect. Everyone had nuclear wars they were tripping over.**

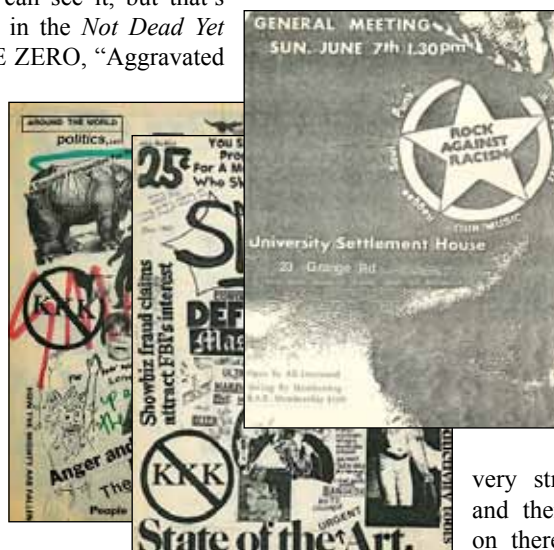
JZ: ... definitely, and those communities brought people together too around the music.

**In particular, you do a song called "Crush the Klan." I wonder if it was written about this idea of the KKK coming up here.**

J: It was absolutely written about that: Paul was

very strong about that, and there's another one on there called "Master Race," which is exactly

the same sort of thing, very similar to the Holocaust poem about "They took away the Catholics, I didn't say anything, they took away the Gypsies, I didn't say anything,



they took away the Jews, I wasn't Jewish, then they came to get me, and I wondered who was gonna speak up. Well no one, 'cause they'd already taken everyone away." So it was that similar sort of idea: be who you are, and you're allowed to be who you are regardless of whatever that is and to support that, and if you don't support that sort of thing, then these narrow-minded supremacist small world-view of what's going on are gonna come and you won't be able to speak and have your basic rights to talk about what's going on. So, yeah: "Crush the Klan," Paul's very much about that in those particular lyrics and was very blunt in that other song, "Master Race," is on the same theme.

E: O.K., let's hear "Crush the Klan."

J: So there you go: we kind of believed in being who you are and being yourself ...

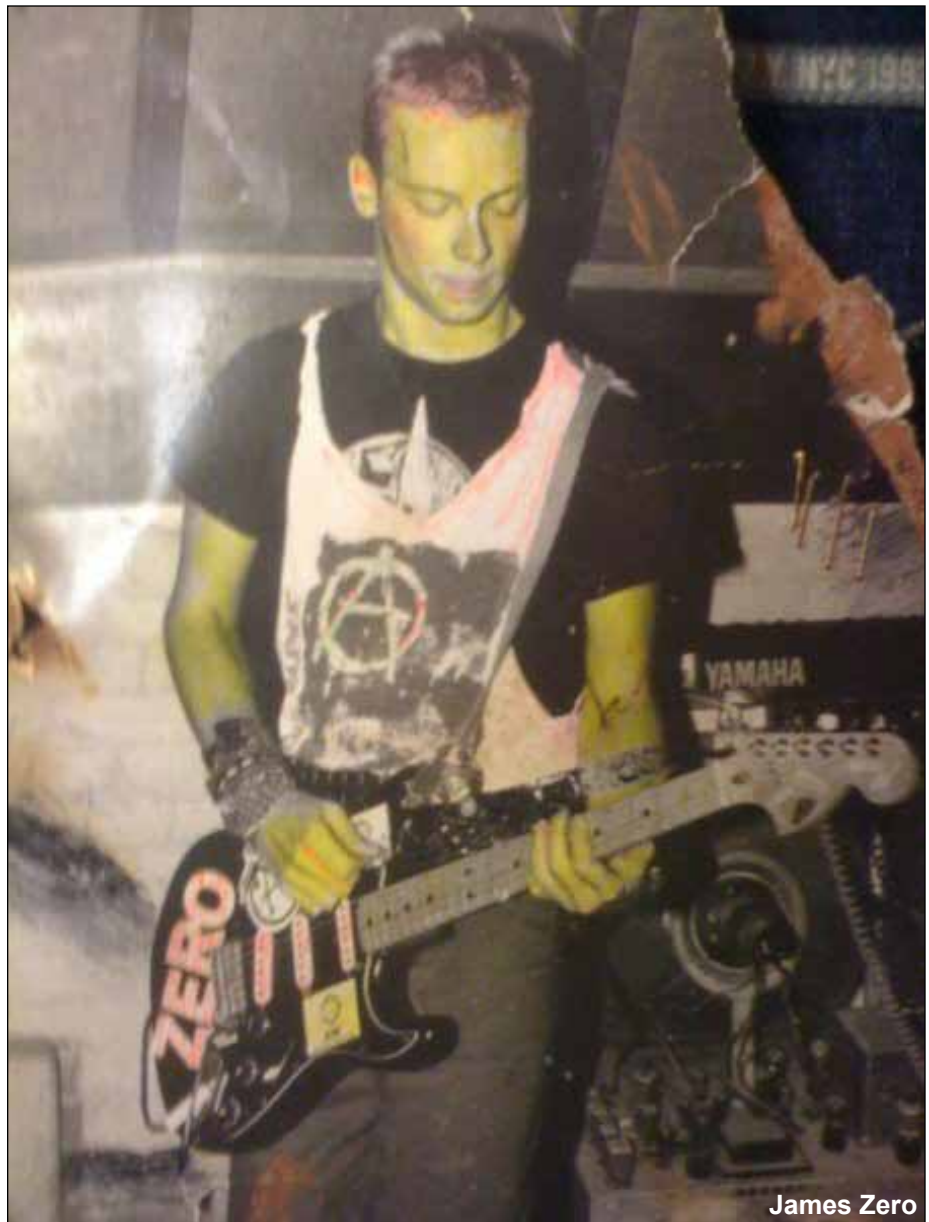
JZ: I'm wearing my "Crush the Klan" t-shirt, under here, see?

J: ... ironically, you said yourself

**Yeah, there's a picture that we put up on our Facebook page that you've got the MDC shirt underneath.**

JZ: Only MDC fans would know that, right? **"Blue by day, white by night," right?**

JZ: Now, that was a big record, and then they did a show, it would have been about a year later, in the summer of '83, and they did a show at the Party Center, 167 Church Street, and that was a well-attended show. I actually was there; I had a little table, I was involved in this semi-political group at the time called Citizens Independent Review of Police Activities, or CIRPA, and that was something that came out of the Toronto bathhouse raids. So I'd met some political activists there, and I kind of got involved with that, and they were mainly working through the media and doing other types of things, but I thought, "You know, this is a very similar message to this band MDC that I really like; I'm going to take a bunch of



James Zero

their cards to the show and try to get people interested."

**The bathhouse raids were a big turning point in terms of activism in the city.**



JZ: Oh, absolutely. That was '81, so I got here a little late for it, but the aftermath and the fallout was huge.

**But the crackdown on Yonge Street had taken place at that point, right?**

JZ: Oh, yeah: riots on Yonge Street, big riots.

**And I believe ACT-UP started ...**

JZ: Well, that would have been a little bit later. You mean ACT-UP the anti-nuclear one?

**No, ACT-UP the HIV/AIDS one.**

JZ: That would have been later on, like the late '80s and into the '90s. There's still a lot of activists that I know and see around who came out of that organization. But that was my first time in Toronto City Hall, and it was all a very exciting time.

J: Even you said this, which was kind of funny: in CREATIVE ZERO you were openly gay, right? You would say you were gay, but in other bands, you didn't say you



were gay.

JZ: It never really came up in any other bands, but when you come from a really small town and small community, it's not much of a secret for very long. So I was very politicized in a way coming and attending U. of T. as well, and I think we brought that to the music, but we always also had a sense of fun. Like we weren't any kind of dour, serious political punks by any means. We were out there to play and have a good time; but by the same time, I was going to demonstrations, and I was getting my feet wet politically for the first time. Before that, about the only way to get your feet wet was off the end of the dock at the farm [laughs]. So this was a whole new exciting thing: I wanted it all, I wanted to be part of all of it.

**I wanted to talk a bit more about the message, but not right at this point. I wanted to ask you a bit more about the music: in the beginning intro parts of that last song, "Crush the Klan," there's this guitar part that sounds almost—I don't know how to describe it other than ...**

JZ: Me either.

**... it reminds me of the *Repo Man* soundtrack ...**

J: Oh, I love that movie.

**... with some of the sort of Mexican ...**

J: Yeah, that one has a sort of Mexican thing ...

JZ: Was that written? Did you tell me to do that? Or did I come up with that? Was that part of the song? You have to remember: later on, after CREATIVE ZERO, I was also in a band called SUDDEN IMPACT, that I was asked to join, once they found out that CREATIVE ZERO was kind of done, and it strikes me as humorous that a lot of people associate me with both of those bands—a little more with CREATIVE ZERO, for sure—but a) I didn't really know how to play guitar, and b) I was just asked to join these bands and learn these songs, and to this day, I don't think I ever learned them properly or correctly, but I was very good at winging it.

J: Besides that one weekend, where I went with a cassette of a practice and said, "James, these are the songs," and went through them—and we practiced every week or so and played a lot of shows—it wasn't like, "No, you need to play it this way." It would be like, "No, just wing it, man." If you listen, the bass and drums are really together, and James is allowed to do whatever he wants over top and put his painting colour over top of that.

JZ: Purely guessing, let me tell you.

**O.K., but when I'm listening to "Crush the Klan" or the song "Nonconform" they sound almost identical. I'm gonna**



**play the song "Nonconform" so you can see: it's the guitar part.**

JZ: Who's "Nonconform" by?

J: Us! Yes!

JZ: I'm awake.

J: O.K., I'll give you that there's a big Mexican influence there. Maybe he had a lot of tacos, I don't know ... Maybe that's all he could play.

JZ: I have no idea. Listening back—you have to remember, it was two years ago or something that you and I met and you started asking about CREATIVE ZERO, and I'm like, "Dude, I have no music, I have no nothing, I don't know where the guys in the band are."

**It was at YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH.**

JZ: The YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH show with FUCKED UP, the FUCKED UP weekend one, and ever since then has been trying to get to this day before we could do it. So just a couple weeks ago, Joel brought me the CD of this demo that we recorded, and I hadn't heard those songs in twenty-eight years. So, all of it, it's the first time that I'm listening to it. The first time that I saw Steve Milo from SUDDEN IMPACT sent me the link for the YouTube of "Aggravated Assault" from the *Not Dead Yet*

film. I watched that and didn't even realize that it was me in it until I'm, like, "Oh, this is a cool band at the Turning Point, this looks great. Wait a minute—wait a minute: oh, wow." That was only a couple of years ago, so there's a twenty, twenty-five-year gap that I just did not ever hear this music, so I can't tell you too much about where the guitar parts came from, other than we—musically, we weren't like a lot of the other hardcore bands. We had the speed, and we had the power, but we were doing different stuff, we really were.

J: There were funny little things in each song, like you say, where we do this Mexican-calypso thing as an intro and then [hardcore buzzsaw imitation] and then [Leone-style flamenco strum], like southern spaghetti Western.

JZ: It sounds like it could be going into a CURE track. [laughs] [under breath] I love THE CURE.

**I associate that period with *Repo Man*, because people had started to see it.**

JZ: Well, that was a little bit—when was *Repo Man*, '84?

**It was later, yeah, you're right.**

JZ: Such a good film: that was the first time I ever seen references to slam dancing or hardcore music in a Hollywood film.

J: Or shrimp, or plate of shrimp. [laughs]

JZ: And they're doing BLACK FLAG "T.V. Party," too, in *Repo Man*. Brilliant. Loved it.

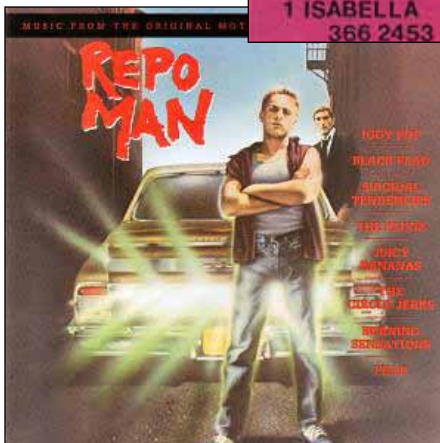
**For sure. What was the song "Nonconform" about? It's sort of obvious, but I'd like to hear it in your words.**

JZ: I got nothin'.

J: Again, you're getting back to an essential theme. There's about four songs that have a military theme to it, and that's one of the military-themed songs. The whole part is about being a recruit, giving up your thought, doing

that whole thing. You've gotta stand in line—even going to school, "sit in rows, put up your hand and go pee when I tell you to, and we'll throw in an education on top of that." So, it's all that sort of thing, right? And up until the point at the end, where the last verse is "Nonconform, nonconform, think for yourself, think for yourself, do it yourself, think for yourself, question what you're being fed."

**Which became a common theme around that time, right? It was really about**



### independent thinking ...

J: Independent thinking is probably the major theme: "I don't care what you think, just think for yourself."

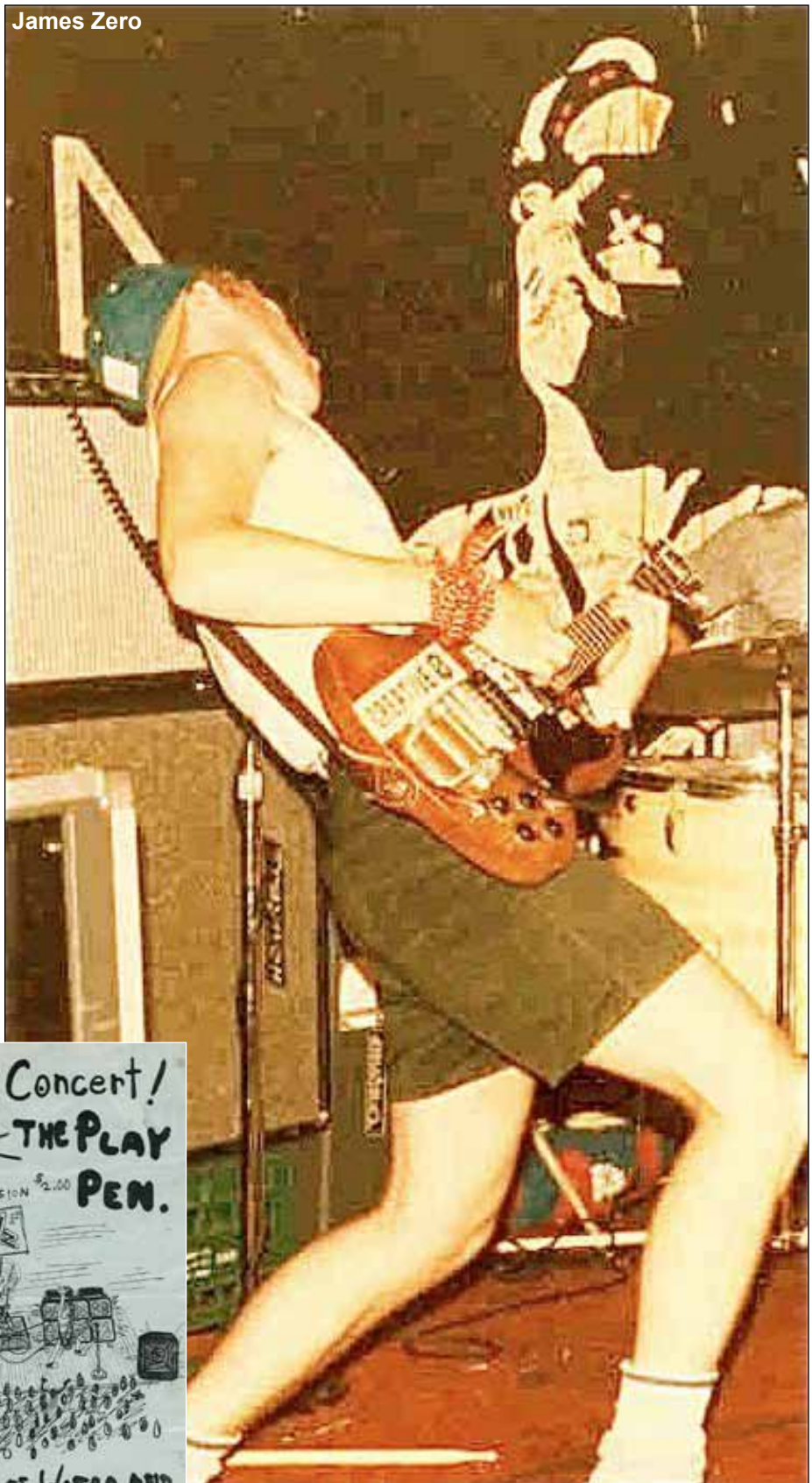
### ... in terms of hardcore.

J: Do it yourself, think for yourself. Don't just swallow what you're being shoved down. Question what you're seeing and come to your own conclusions. You're seeing something in the media: it's been presented that way for you, to try to get you to react in a certain way, and sometimes"—gee, it hasn't changed a lot, has it?—right up until now, and I go through that with my own children: "You gotta understand that they put the camera on that, and afterwards they cut away to that person smiling or frowning to evoke a reaction. Most headlines, most things in the newspapers, aren't made to make you think: they want you to react emotionally. That way, you don't think: you're just having a visceral response. *Sun* headline, Fox News: they don't want you to think, they just want you to react and go [huffily], 'I believe this, I'm all worked up about it'. No, you're not really looking on and coming to your own conclusion." That started—that to me is what the whole hardcore scene was about, and what I really took away from it, even today, you can do whatever you gotta do, but don't sit there—there's still a little bit of that cynicism or questioning about whatever I'm supposed to eat.

JZ: Everything about CREATIVE ZERO was definitely DIY, for sure, from the start to the finish. We were just making our own way through a scene that was also making its way at the time. There wasn't very much that was established: it changed month to month and year to year.

J: And you say we were having fun and we were laughing because that's what we wanted to do: we wanted to do this and to say this message but what we wanted to do was, yeah, we're gonna do it ourselves and enjoy ourselves doing it and get a good laugh in as well. That's why—to get back to "Jocks Fuck Off"—it's kind of funny to sit there and go, "Hey, you, you asshole punk rocker," have that all turned around on you and make it a joke for

James Zero



us, right?

Yeah, as therapy, right?

JZ: We had just crazy, immense amounts of fun on stage. I don't know if too many listeners may have seen a CREATIVE ZERO show or not, if any—I hope there's

somebody out there listening who might have seen a CREATIVE ZERO show—but we just—Joel has more energy in his baby finger that anyone half his age would have right now playing the drums.

**You have this flyer of him playing at a KIDZ show, and there's a caricature of**



**Joel; can you describe the caricature?**

JZ: Well, yeah, it's like a million drum sticks going a million miles an hour in every direction, and that's exactly what it was like. He was the engine of the band ...

**Even watching him in here today playing along air drums to this.**

JZ: Bucky on bass would more or less hold it down and just play this distorted bass ...

**Sub-guitar.**

JZ: ... and he was always hitting the notes, and generally he had that going on, and then you had me and Paul, and there was no way that the two of us were on stage in any way static, and Paul would do back flips over all of us and just carry on, and Steve Milo from SUDDEN IMPACT liked to say that I perfected what he calls the "guitar backside grind," which means I would play the guitar bent so far over backwards that occasionally I fell right over on my ass doing it ...

J: À la SPINAL TAP.

JZ: ... à la SPINAL TAP. At that time, I was young enough I could pick myself back up. I would just absolutely lurch and thrash—we thrashed on stage, it felt like being in the pit thrashing and moshing: we thrashed on stage. That's what hardcore thrash was about to me: you really had to give it. And all the bands that I liked, too, like ARTICLES OF FAITH or BAD BRAINS, those types of bands, too, seeing those bands perform, absolutely electric. NECROS, that was another great band to see, too.

J: We were tall, too, like, Bucky was about 6'6, and Paul was 6'4, you're over six foot, so it was all these tall guys jumping all over the place, and Bucky's about 6'6 in his straddle thing with his big Rickenbacker bass playing sub-guitar, and these guys would just be bouncing all over the place, right?

And then you'd have the crowd jumping all over and



Paul, Creative Zero

bouncing into stuff, so it was quite comical looking out ...

JZ: Which was encouraged. At a good show, you'd have people trailing across the front of the stage all the time. You look at hardcore YouTube videos from this time of this kind of music, and at a good show you've got people flying off the stage the whole time, and so that always made it kind of dynamic.

J: Someone else would be jumping up, and it would go like this, dancing, and then launching off into the pit ...

JZ: ... lurching right into your guitar, you go lurching into the amp. How many times did

we knock over into the drums? Quite a bit, I'm sure.

**You're basically pushing back to give yourself enough room to avoid getting crushed.**

JZ: Those were the good shows, when all the people just got up and went for it. That didn't happen too too often for the local band opening up, but sometimes it did.

J: That was one thing, where you'd laugh and say, we'd give it if there was two people in the room or if there was fifty or a hundred people in the room: we'd be jumping around going, "Hey, we're gonna have the time of our

life; you can come along for the ride if you want."

JZ: We lived to play live: that's what it was about.

**That opportunity didn't always come by, so it was great to have it.**

JZ to J: You tell the story about you showing up at the Turning Point in your work gear from down the street: this is beautiful.

J: I was going to school, so you had to pay your rent, so I worked at Mother's Pizza down the road from the Turning Point ...

JZ: On Bloor Street.

J: ... right across from Varsity Stadium ...

**Yes, I remember: it was on the north side.**

J: ... so I'd work there to make my rent, and I'd always walk down the road to go to my show afterwards to play the Turning Point—it's just down the road, right?—so I had my black pants and white shirt and I'd take off my tie that I had to wear, and every show, every show [adult doorperson's voice]: "I'm sorry, sir, you'll have to pay." Always. I laughed, tonight you asked if we had any pictures of CREATIVE ZERO, I go, "I guarantee there's not one—even in the video *Not Dead Yet*—you don't see the drummer." You don't see the drummer: you always see the guitar player ...

JZ: The guitar player and the singer were so compelling.

J: ... so it would be like, "You need to pay." "No, no: he's in the band." "No, you're not in the band." "Seriously, I'm in the band; let me in."

JZ: "I'm on stage in two minutes."

J: Then you play and you're a sweaty mess and they're, "Oh, you're in the band, that's great."

JZ: You used to keep that skinny black tie on, it was kind of cool. It was a sort of mack look goin' on. I hope you put it on as a headband when we covered "Metal Health."

J: Actually, the only shot of a headband wearing it in person was you.

JZ: Could have been.

J: Just fucking with you.

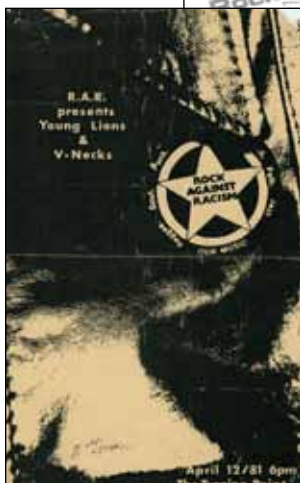
**I want to get back to the lyrics a bit. I remember the YOUNG LIONS were staunch advocates of fighting racism, and they did a lot of stuff for Rock Against Racism—James is holding up the YOUNG LIONS record here—**

JZ: So glad this got put out.

**Yeah, me too. So, were you inspired by the Rock Against Racism movement that existed in the city at the time?**

J: Well, you were on the one side or the other, really: were you a skinhead or were you against racism? We were for open-mindedness, so obviously we were with Rock Against Racism.

**You talked about the song "Master**



**Race.” Can you tell me what the song “Master Race” is about?**

J: Well, exactly what I was talking about earlier: to me, it’s based upon the Holocaust poem of “They came and took the Jews away ...” Really, that’s the theme of “Master Race”: and there was so much of that Reaganism coming in and [Bubba voice], “Well, this is good Americanism, and

we need to get rid of all those weird non-conformists,” and there was always that sort of thing, the Rock Against Racism sort of thing, Jerry Falwell/Moral Majority—which was neither moral nor the majority, right?—and we were standing up going, “No: this is what we believe in.” You either stand up for it, or they’re gonna be down—don’t ignore history or you’ll be repeating it. Even right now, you see this sort of stuff going on ...

JZ: The stuff that’s going on now with the Occupy movement—and I especially thought of this the previous summer with the G20—I was thinking, what’s happening now and recently is the stuff that we were convinced was going to come. It didn’t quite come—it was on the verge of coming—in the early ‘80s. You had Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, you had the PTL Club Christian stuff going off the hook, you had Anita Bryant doing her thing against the gay community in Florida: it was just relentless, it was everywhere.

And in England, they had the Falkland War going on with Thatcher ...

J: They were stupider about it, though, because they just came out and said it. Now they learn the catchwords and say, “We’re trying to do this, we’re trying to do that.”

JZ: It’s even more insidious now than it was. Back then, it was jokey but it was still pretty powerful. I read something about this just recently in the paper where—I think it’s very true—Reaganomics was the beginning of the dismantling a lot of the democratic process in the U.S., and bankers became the people who really had the power in



make people scared, and you can take away personal liberties for “their own safety, of course,” and “get rid of the marginalized, for their own safety, of course.”

JZ: And now, blessedly, we have CIUT radio, and we have a lot of other media, we have all the social media and Facebook and YouTube where people can talk about ideas, but back then, the only way you talked about these ideas was really through bands, I think, or music, or fanzines, do-it-yourself print things: these were the only types of counterculture, other ways of opinion that you would get. You certainly wouldn’t find it on CHUM FM or the beginning of music-video channels, et cetera ...

J: Don’t worry: they shut down this show ten minutes ago when we started talking about ... [censor tone].

JZ: If you had an opinion and you wanted to express it back then, you could paint yourself up a t-shirt, you could make a button, you could go to, maybe, a rally, if you found some like-minded people, or you could start a band and put out some music, so that’s the way that

we looked at it: it was our way to express ourselves.

**Here’s the song “Master Race.”**

J: That last verse [which got cut off] was probably the most important one. We should talk a bit about Paul, too.

JZ: We’ve got to talk about Paul.

**Tell me about who he was.**

JZ: The heart and soul and passion of the band, for sure.

government, et cetera, which has been right up to this whole Occupy Wall Street, and has been really let go more or less unfettered.

J: And then they could do the whole, “Terrorism,” and take away personal freedoms that way, because “society is getting more violent,” even though every statistic shows that the crime rate is at an all-time low that it’s ever been, but you make people afraid, you



J: Like I said, we met Paul, he was a sixteen-year-old kid who had all these poems and this whole worldview, and we were like, “Man, that’s very cool.” And you know how sometimes when you’re younger you can almost crystallize and be more bold about what you see and think? And this is what came out. But the irony about Paul was—I found out, I think it was about 1998, Paul passed away in a car accident—but by the time CREATIVE ZERO happened ...

JZ: Somewhere out in western Canada, where he was working ... oil fields, Edmonton.

J: ... he had this whole thing, he did CREATIVE ZERO, and after it broke up, it was kind of like he grew up in his sense of the world and kind of disavowed himself from that whole, “Oh, that was my naïve youth sort of time in my life.” He liked it and thought it was sort of cool but “It was very naïve and young of me to have such a strong world view; now I’m gonna go work with my dad out in the oil fields.” And he grew into—like I said, he was about 6’4 but he was this skinny little kid. When I saw him, he was like 6’4 and 220 pounds burly lumberjack oil-rig guy the last time I bumped into him, I think it was about 1994. And he was still like, “Hey, Joel, great to see

you, man, dadadadada,” but I was like, “Hey, man, CREATIVE ZERO,” but he was like, “No, I don’t write any more, that was me when I was young and impressionistic,” and I’m like, “No, you were very spot on on a lot of

stuff you were talking about.”

JZ: And listen to this demo: the dude could





really sing. He had a power and a musicality to his voice that I think really—there were good screamer-singers in the other local hardcore bands we played with: there was compelling singers who looked good at what they were doing and were into it, but Paul could both sing—because we did play covers that actually did have some tune to them, as compared to the straight-out break-neck hardcore stuff—not only could he sing, he wrote these poems and these lyrics, but, on stage, the guy just gave it. I remember no effort whatsoever; he would just show up in a t-shirt and sweat pants, whatever he had on that day (which was probably what he had on for the last week), and then he would show up and get on stage and his face would go purple, and he would just slam himself around the place and scream himself raw and he was just, “That’s how I do it.” And we didn’t do anything particularly to encourage this: that was just the way he was. He was a passionate dude: he was into it, and that’s what made me get into it even more, because I absolutely loved playing in this band because from the moment we started everybody was just trying to outdo—he was trying to play faster, I was trying to play louder, Paul was just all over the place, and Bucky was always just always doing his at thing full-tilt. So, like Joel said, it didn’t matter if there were just two people there—and even when we practiced, we jammed in your basement, we’d do the same thing. We were the most important thing, to us, for sure, and that’s what made it so much fun, and that’s why the music I think is kind of special and different too, because it was unique.



J: Paul had a very wonderful, fully formed world view at that particular time in his life and expressed it, and very relevant: I’m listening to it now and going, “Oh, yeah, that’s still pretty relevant.”

JZ: But if you met him and saw him on stage he was a wild, crazy, intense singer, but if you’d meet him in person, he was hilarious: the jokes never stopped, we were always cracking up ...

J: Giggling. But he was on marijuana then [laughs]

JZ: Well, you know, as a teenager running around in the punk-rock scene, you’re into whatever’s going around, and everything and as much as possible—I think we all were—but he was really funny and extremely passionate and to this day I think just a really really great person to watch sing this kind of music. There was nothing

static about it: he was all over the place. I don’t think any band that we opened for always gave us good comments and were very flattering about what they’d seen us do—whether we were in tune or not, I doubt—but ...

J: Another good point was that Paul wasn’t an asshole. He was a nice guy. That was his world view, but it wasn’t like, “Well, I’m on stage now, so let me preach to you.”

JZ: Not at all: no, no, no, no.

J: He’d be like, “Yeah, I’ll tell you what I think when I’m standing up there with my lyrics,” but for the rest of the time ...

JZ: He’d be cracking up, for sure. He’d be the first one to make jokes, make faces, do impressions of people—he did killer impressions of other people that were just hysterically funny impressions of other Toronto bands and singers ... I’ll leave that one alone.

**O.K., he had things to say. I was thinking of the song “White Crosses.” We were talking earlier about the military-industrial complex and the whole war motif that the society ran on. The song “White Crosses” brings up images of Flanders fields or something like that, the futility of war I would think ...**

J: That’s exactly—that comes out—you got that, you got “Hero for a Day,” the same theme coming out of that.

JZ: There’s a lot of anti-war stuff in CREATIVE ZERO.

**I just wanted to lead up to this one, because I wanted to play—there’s a few here, so I want to start talking about these war themes—so “White Crosses,” that was about ...**



J: Dying senselessly, and, again, buying the—swallowing the message and going, “Yes, I must go off and die for my country, I must go off and dadadadada.” All I am is just an endless white cross out there and how futile that is: why are we dying? Why are we going off and doing that? Sure, maybe there is the good fight, but a lot of the time he’s talking about, “You’ve got me going off to some banana republic to prop up this fight against the Cold War ...” And that sort of idea: don’t just buy into that.

JZ: Pretty prevalent in the bands of the day, too: DIRECT ACTION had a lot of anti-war songs, I remember ASEXUALS—‘cause we were pretty good buds with them—“Contra Rebels” was a big one, so people ... DUB RIFLES was a band that came through town and they were a very politicized type of band ...

#### From Winnipeg.

JZ: Yeah, and Andrew Cash, now an M.P., playing an acoustic at the Beverly ...

J: L’ETRANGER.

JZ: ... L’ETRANGER. It was prevalent because the threat was very, very prevalent. **It was very real.**

JZ: People thought that we were—and I think we were—teetering on the edge of nuclear meltdown. The Cold War between Russia and the U.S. was off the hook; China was lurking in the background, and it was very real.

J: If you had interviewed any of us in 1982 or ’83, ’84 and said, “How do you think the world is going to turn out?” The vast majority of people in the scene would say, “One of these knobs is going to push a button and start a nuclear war.”

#### Any day now.

J: And that’s how it’s going to end. And there was *The Day After* on TV and there were all these programs, and we just figured, “Yeah, that’s the way it’s gonna go: some yobbo’s gonna

launch it and

everything’s gonna go boom.”

[About “White Crosses”]: The sub-guitar really comes out on that one.

JZ: Well, this whole mix ... I’m not thrilled with the guitar tones in it at all, but look at this really crappy guitar I was using.

J: Yeah, but there you hear it with him starting it [imitates sub-guitar]: that’s just him coming in doing the intro instead of the guitar, ‘cause that’s all he would do is play the Mexican-southern stuff, right? So when we wanted a heavy intro we had to get the sub-guitar going.

JZ: Here’s something I’m trying to remember and relive for the first time: O.K., so you definitely always did do background vocals, you always had a mic. Did we have a mic set up out front?

J: Paul would come over, and you would go, “White Crosses.”

JZ: So that picture that you found from



*Maximumrocknroll*, which blows my mind because a) I don’t know where that’s shot and what it’s from, but obviously I’m singing some back up with Paul on that one, I’m just wondering what it might have been.

J: You never wanted a mic in front of you on a stage ...

JZ: Well, I would have knocked my teeth out ...

J: ... but you would have knocked your teeth out, so what you would do is the singer would always have it in his hand, so if it got smashed into him you’d get his fist in the face and not the microphone, and the background singer would go there ‘cause if you had a mic and you went up to it like that, inevitably you would have lost all your teeth.

JZ: The way that the performances went down, for sure.

**I wanted to ask you about MDC. We talked about them; you have a shirt on. Around that time, they put out the P.E.A.C.E. comp that all kinds of great hardcore bands on it, and I think that was an influential record, maybe, maybe not. I was wondering if it was an influence on you guys.**

JZ: For me, I had their first album, and I thought ...

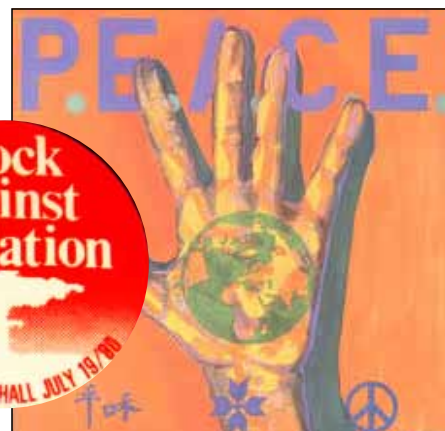
#### Which was a groundbreaking album.

JZ: ... I thought it was a new pinnacle for hardcore. There was so much music coming out all over the place. So I’m thinking back to what I listened to in the basement in that residence room across the lot here ...

J: See, tapes is how you would hear things.

JZ: ... tapes were really big; I still have my MICROEDGE demo that has VENOM that Reid from MICROEDGE recorded for me on the b-side of the MICROEDGE demo. I don’t have any CREATIVE ZERO demos, but I have this MICROEDGE demo to this day. But I remember listening—oh, I listened to a lot of reggae, for one thing,

and still do—but I remember certain albums that I played a lot at that time, and one of them was the AGENT O R A N G E album, which I really, really liked, so that had that California kind of tone; DEAD KENNEDYS, of



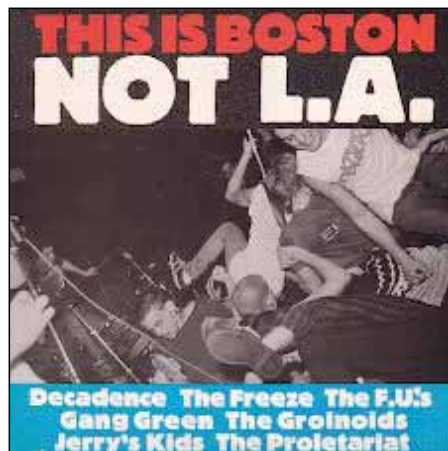


course, and I still then and now played a lot of metal, and I listened to that, but the MDC record was one of the heaviest and fastest, intensest ...

**Fastest ... time changes.**

JZ: ... yeah: I liked it better than MINOR THREAT. Punk rock was so fun at this time: hardcore punk rock because it was faster faster faster faster, right, who was the fastest, heaviest band that could be? It was MINOR THREAT, or was it BAD BRAINS, and then BLACK FLAG, et cetera. But MDC—especially that song “Kill the Lights”—I just thought was one of the most intense things I’d ever heard in my life. I really really dug it. I dug the dynamics of it, the intensity of that singer. Seeing them live, usually I got a little disappointed ‘cause I think CREATIVE ZERO’s a little bit the opposite: you hear these tracks we recorded, it doesn’t come close to how we sounded live in terms of power. Other bands, the records sound so amazing, but I remember not being impressed with MDC just because the guitar player with the guitar tone, I was all about—and still am—just the best, crunchiest guitar tone you could have. And so often with hardcore and punk, it becomes very thin and razor-y distortion, and it doesn’t carry on the way it should, or the way it might have been recorded on record. But that MDC album was huge for me. I like DISCHARGE, I listened to DISCHARGE a lot; I listened to U.K. stuff, but I listened to more U.K. stuff as a teenager. By the time I was in university, it was pretty much pure reggae and hardcore and even other—if you went to the U.

of T. pubs at the time, you started to hear a lot of recently—eye magazine did a great profile on Club Voodoo, and so all of that New Romantic, new wave music. If I went out with people and went dancing at a student pub or something like that, you’d be hearing GANG OF FOUR and FAD GADGET and who knows what else, those types of early ‘80s alternative sounds, I guess, or college rock sounds at the time. It was pretty much always U.K. imported stuff, but I’d go out sometimes and see those bands. I remember seeing GANG OF FOUR: they were awesome, at the Concert Hall.



**I want to ask you about the song “Rest in Peace”: what is that about?**

JZ: Let me guess: war?

J: “White Crosses” part two?

JZ: Part three and part four.

J: Again, the same thing: don’t go off and buy a lie and die.

**There’s a lot of war themes on this.**

J: There’s about four ...

**O.K., we’ve talked about America’s dirty wars in Central America with the banana republics, but there was a song that you wrote called “Justice in the Green Berets”: it’s probably one of my favourite songs, mostly because—James, you were talking about the backup vocals, it’s really prominent in this song, and it’s also great for it. In one way, the song stands out because of the gang vocals in the back,**

**and there’s a lot of emphasis on it, but I think also the song—I was a big fan of the F.U.s, I don’t know if you know them ...**

JZ: Yeah, I know who you mean.

**... they were on Boston, Not L.A. and they had a song called “Green Beret” and when I heard the song called “Justice in the Green Berets” ...**

JZ: But these songs were all written before we knew a lot of those bands, that’s for sure. But I remember the *This is Boston, Not L.A.* hardcore comp: that flew out of the Record Peddler. That one was a big deal: everyone wanted to get all over that Boston sound, because, again, the fastest and heaviest going for a little while was the Boston scene, for sure, right?

J: James doesn’t remember this, but there were about three songs—the majority of those songs were written in Peterborough and then we came here—about five or six of these songs were written when James was in the band, and this was one of the songs that was written when James was in the band ... JZ: Apparently, I had something to do with it.

J: ... and he doesn’t remember it at all, but it is a sort of funny song, it isn’t just a two-part song, it’s got two or three or four parts to it that it switches, but the lyrics are really poignant there about “little girls are being raped, and we drink Coca-Cola and we look the other way,” which is all about corporate America saying, “Hey, don’t look down there in South America; we’re doing all this nasty stuff down there.”

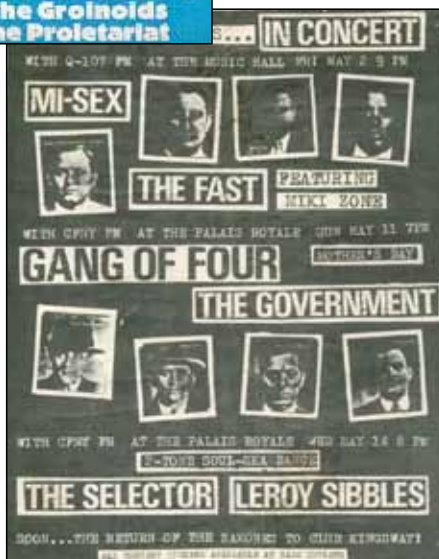
**I remember in El Salvador, the nuns had been raped, and in Guatemala, that’s where they were trying to set up unions in the Coca-Cola shops ...**

J: And they took rifle butts to their faces.

**... and they would slit their tongues out of their throats, and slit their throats ...**

J: Acid on their faces.

**... and throw them in the central square to say, “This is what you get when you**





try to organize against Coca-Cola." I remember these stories pretty vividly because I was also studying this at York.

J: But now we'll try to save polar bears. I remember my arm hurt after playing that.

JZ: Fast as CHRONIC SUBMISSION, tuneful as the ASEXUALS: we had it all going on on that recording.

**Yeah, that's the thing: there are a lot of things that are synthesized ...**

JZ: I don't know if we had those background vocals live, but if we did, and we must have made some interpretation, but we were probably unique that way. Because YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH definitely just had a lead singer, there was no background going on there. The latest version of the CHRONICS they've got Ruston singing off the drum kit, but I don't know if he did in the first rendition, I don't think he did.

J: Never give a drummer a microphone. [laughs] I know Ruston: he's a good guy.

JZ: DIRECT ACTION, APB: those people only had one singer and that was it. There'd be singalongs with the crowd, for sure, but that song, that's like the evolution of CREATIVE ZERO: we're getting a little more musical and melodic.

J: My major thought on most CREATIVE ZERO shows was I could hear my drums and nothing else, 'cause there wasn't many wonderful sounds

...  
JZ: We're not talking about on-

stage monitors here or anything.

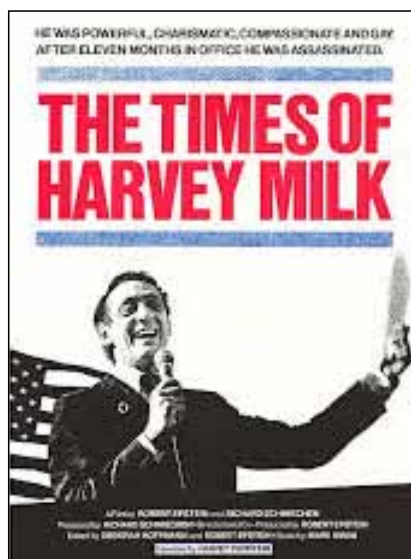
J: ... you would practice and you would go [loud distorted band sound], and if everyone stopped at the same time, I knew, "Oh, great, they're on. That guy didn't stop late." Or if you did a roll at the wrong time, they'd switch to a different part, 'cause you had these sort of clues, like if I hit a cymbal, that was when we done four/eight progressions, and it switched to the different part ...

**Well, it was so fast, you could just imagine making sure that we'd get to the next part, right? As musicians, you don't want to get out of sync, you're trying to get to the next part, you're playing really fast ...**

JZ: Playing this music was always a little precision challenged; I faced that even more when I joined SUDDEN IMPACT.

J: Bucky and me would try and lock, that's what you had to do, right, the bass and drums were supposed to be there, and the vocals and guitar are like the painting over top.

**James, we were talking about your sexual orientation. I want to ask you about**



**homophobia: was homophobia a big deal at the time?**

JZ: You know, I don't really think that it was at ... the bigger shows, I don't really ... I don't think so.

**Was it safe to come out? You said that you were out.**

JZ: But not ... there were two sides to it: I had my musician friends and the stuff that I did musically, and then I had my university friends and the things that I did at school. And there was a little bit of mixing there, but not a lot, really. I did my stuff at school, and I was involved over here at the theater, at the UC Playhouse, so I was involved in shows like Jean Genet's *The Maids* and things like that, so it was all very very out and open if you were in theater in university, et cetera, but I didn't bring it a whole lot to the music scene, but I never worried about it, for that matter. You would meet people, and they would kind of confess to you or you would confess to them, but I didn't think there was any ... I didn't experience it as any kind of homophobic scene. Definitely at shows at the Turning Point and Larry's, everybody was just free to do their thing and be whatever, and young people being young people, there was gossip about "This person is that, and that person is this," as twenty-somethings will do and still do, sadly, in some ways, when it really shouldn't matter, but people gossip about who people leave the bar with, that kind of stuff. But I didn't think that it was particularly like that. I think if anybody tried to voice something like that, they probably would have gotten pretty shouted down; people were reasonably politicized, I think, by what had gone on in the city previously, a year or two before, and was still going on in some ways. I went to my first Pride thing around here at U. of T., it was like four-hundred people, and now it's like a million people, and this was way before the city sanctioned it or anything else, and ever so slowly that kind of thing built up. But I don't think it was, but there was ...

I can't say there was. You later met people like FIFTH COLUMN and Bruce LaBruce and those types of people, and I never met those people; I didn't meet them until years and years later. I never met them when I was in these bands. I feel like I really missed out, to tell you the truth.

J: The thing was, James was gay and he said he



was gay, and “So, James is gay, so what, that’s what James is, he’s our guitar player.” It’s not like it was a question of “Hey, you know, like, I need to tell you, I’m a gay man here.” That’s just what he was, right? “I’m a black man.” “I’m Jewish.” “I’m Christian.” Whatever you were, if that’s what you were, that’s what you were. We all knew it in the band, and that’s just his sexuality, right? It’s not anything, it’s just part of who he is.

JZ: I would say, definitely, though, being involved in music at this time, I came out politically before I came out personally, for sure: I would be going to these events—and a lot of things happened culturally at that time besides demonstrations and besides going to university: things like the first Harvey Milk documentary came out, I remember seeing that film at the Bloor Cinema and just being absolutely reduced to tears by seeing, not this Sean Penn remake from a couple of years ago, but the very first documentary on Harvey Milk, and when I saw in that film the images of the burning police cars in San Francisco

and I went, “That’s the cover of the first DEAD KENNEDY S record!” Right, is what that image is from, and things like that, and I decided that I would take more of a stand, and my political actually became personal, and I would make more of a point of it, at least in terms of calling out homophobia if I experienced it or heard it from other people.

**Did you feel that you paid a price for it at all?**

JZ: Two ninety-nine, on sale. No, absolutely not.

**This scene was open-minded enough.**

JZ: I think so. It never really came up.

J: I think there was a long-established history of gay musicians in the ‘70s and ‘80s ...

JZ: Oh, for sure, in the punk scene ...

J: ... in the punk scene, and it was hip to be gay for awhile there, during the later ‘70s the early ‘80s to be androgynous or bisexual et cetera et cetera. Having said that, there’s always homophobes everywhere, just like there’s racists and other people. If you’re close-minded, you’re close-minded, and it would be just another thing to be close-minded about. If you’re someone who’s accepting of what other people are about, that’s what you’re about, and it’s not a big deal.



JZ: At the same time that I was going to these types of hardcore shows in the early ‘80s, I’d never miss a NINA HAGEN concert. If there was any place you were going to find

other queer punks, it was gonna be NINA HAGEN, that’s for sure.

**She was awesome.**

J: We did draw the line with doing show tunes in the band.

JZ: Yeah, no show tunes. But we did do some great covers: are we gonna play any of the cover stuff?

**We will: I’m gonna try to get to it.**

J: We’ll shut up, then.

**What is the song “Cash” about?**

JZ: Good one: I don’t know.

**Because when I’m thinking about it, I’m thinking about the Occupy movement ...**

J: That’s a great point: I was listening to it the other day going, “Wow, that’s spot on: ‘Where’s the cash? Where’s the dough? Where’s the rich pointing guns at the poor? What’s the point? What’s the use? What did we do to earn such abuse? Rich man, give me a chance: pull your strings and I will dance. Abuse me, please.’” It’s all about calling out the society for what it was then and, ironically, even more so now.

**The class war. The ninety-nine percent. Here we go: this is “Cash.”**

J: Sounded great, Paul.

JZ: That was just so much IRON MAIDEN influence coming through.

J: You can hear the metal coming through on that one. [laughs] But the recording was sort of funny because Brian from YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH, God love him, taking a young band like us that never would have gone into a studio and said, “I’m gonna record you.”

JZ: We didn’t have a dime, we didn’t have anything to put forward for this, and he invited us to come in, and we just thought, “whoa.” This was huge.

J: No one had studios; it’s not like there were millions of studios anywhere for anyone to do this. Great: so we went in, we got one night, it’s overnight, it used to be the old City-TV building ...

**That’s where Accusonic was.**

J: Yeah, Accusonic is where we did it.

JZ: Definitely overnight: cheap rate.

J: So it was January, I remember, it was freezing cold. I drove back from Ottawa in a blizzard that shut down the 401: “I’m not gonna miss my recording.” So I got back from there and we got there—

**So did it cost you anything?**

J: No, Brian footed the bill. Thankyouthankyouthankyou.

JZ: He put up the money, I think you only had to pay for whatever it was, the two-inch tape.

J: No, it’s one-inch tape: I’ve got the tape.

JZ: He’s got the tape, so it cost him some



Sudden Impact

money eventually.

J: I remember it being about 1990, and I'm going, "Oh, man, Brian," and I went into the Peddler and I go, "You still got that CREATIVE ZERO tape, man?" He goes [glumly], "Yeah, I got it: you want it?" I go, "Yeah, I'd like to have it so it just doesn't disappear." He goes, "I was just gonna throw it out anyway." He wouldn't do that: he was just kind of giving it to me. "Well, I'd like to buy it, and have it for the band."

JZ: That's the heartache of the band, to me, was we were so excited because we were gonna be on volume two of *Toronto Hardcore* ...

**This is a story I didn't know: I didn't realize there was going to be a second volume.**

JZ: Yeah, because the CHRONICs got on there and APB and YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH and YOUNG LIONS and the next version was gonna be us and MICROEDGE and whoever else was coming up at the time, maybe POC and BLIBBER and some of those other bands ...

J: DEAD END was around at the time.

JZ: ... and we were so excited because we knew this one compilation was out—and don't forget, this came out on cassette only, right—but everybody who was into this music had it and bought it from the Peddler, it was flying off the shelves, and we thought, "Wow, we could be on a compilation: *Maximumrocknroll* could find out about us!"

J: So we went in and did fourteen songs in one night ...

JZ: One take.

J: That's it: we just played through our set. "There's our song." Every song. And then James got to go back in and do an overdub on a second guitar ...

JZ: Which you just heard in that track. I was, like, "Yes!"

J: So there was a second guitar and the solo you would hear in different things.

**You were able to squeeze in overdubs.**

JZ: A couple.

J: "We're gonna play through the whole thing, and just double up your guitar. Play the same thing, just double it up."

JZ: There's maybe one time that I ever saw Brian Taylor supremely excited and happy, and I think it was either this recording or maybe later when I did some recording with SUDDEN IMPACT. But I did something on guitar—I don't know, like I always did, I improvised a lead with no idea of scales or tune or anything else or key I was playing in or anything—I just wailed, right?—and whatever I did



really turned his crank, 'cause he came running out of the control booth and he said, "Do that again!" And I said, "I don't know what I did: I just made it up." And I was really embarrassed to admit that, too, but it's still true to this day, I've never taken a guitar lesson in my life. It's totally by feel, it's the only way I know how to play. I can pick out a tune a little bit, but I have no musical training. I think that's pretty evident in some of the songs.

J: You hear that in this: we're just ripping through the songs, and then afterward it's like, "O.K., you guys get one take of the backing vocals, we're just gonna play through the tape, and you guys are gonna sing: get around a mic, and whatever comes up in that song, sing it" and you hear it. All this session was done, at the end of it, they do two dubs.

JZ: That was it. Dub to cassette: "Here."

J: "You get one, you get one. See you later, guys." And basically, that's where this recording comes from. One of those dubs was taken, and they would make generations of copies of cassettes, and that

would be distributed to the hardcore scene. I remember guys going, "Yeah, I got the CREATIVE ZERO stuff," and I go, "How'd you get it?" and they'd go, "My buddy dubbed it off a dub off a dub off a dub off a dub," right? So that was it, and the whole thing was done ...

JZ: I hope someone's recording this right now on cassette right now, at home, old school.

J: We'll give it to anyone who wants it. I tell you what: donate to CIUT ...

JZ: Make a pledge to CIUT, and get a limited edition of CREATIVE ZERO ...

J: And he'll make you a burn the whole thing for free.

JZ: You've got to pledge to this show.

J: We had the one night, that was it, the whole thing, run through it, do the overdubs one time, now's your time: here're the background vocals the one time; here's your dub now, boys."

JZ: But for me, for sure, first time ever in a professional recording studio. For you too?

J: Ahh, yeah, absolutely, yeah.

JZ: It was a pretty big thrill.

**And it's an amazing-sounding recording, too. I love this recording: I've been listening to this recording all week.**

JZ: All right! We're number one on EXD!

**Yeah, I don't know what that means, but I wanted to ask you about, we talked about DISCHARGE: you guys talked to me after the CHRONIC SUBMISSION show, saying, James, I think you told me you did a cover of "State Control."**

JZ: We have a debate about this back and forth: Joel doesn't remember, but I swear one of the first songs I learned with the band was "State Control." 'Cause I like DISCHARGE anyway, I remember playing it, I remember Paul singing it, I'm telling you that we covered "State Control."

J: Maybe if you play "State Control," I would remember whether we played it.

JZ: Have you got it? Play it!

J: I know we did "Metal Health will drive you mad" ...

**"State control, state control: this is state control."**

J: No, we never did that.

JZ: You can look on the YouTube, you can get a YouTube of DISCHARGE doing it.

J: We never played that, we did Twis—

JZ: I think when we—have you seen the full *Not Dead Yet* film?

**We'll get to the covers in a minute.**

JZ: Are we only in it for the one song?

**Yes, I have a copy.**

JZ: Because I think the song that we recorded for that was us doing "State Control."

J: I guarantee it isn't.

JZ: Well, anyway, it's a great song, and I



love playing it, and never mind about the drummer.

Well, here's why I bring up the DISCHARGE thing, because I hear the influence on "This Can't Be Utopia."

JZ: Perhaps.

J: Hey, I wrote that one!

O.K., I'm gonna play it.

JZ: Let's go.

So the second half sounds like the RAMONES [laughs], but I was thinking that the first part sounded like "State Control" a little bit.

J: To me, that's more the GANG OF FOUR thing.

Maybe, maybe.

JZ: I am telling you for the last time: when I first found out about the band, it wasn't you, I'm not sure whether it was Greg or Paul who said, "Yeah, CREATIVE ZERO, they're pretty good, they do a really good cover of DISCHARGE, of 'State Control'." I know this for a fact. Undeniable.

J: Well, hopefully, they'll invite me into that band one day.

JZ: I remember one song we did that's a cover and I have no knowledge of the fifteen we recorded that we're listening to tonight.

But the song itself in terms of themes reminds me of BAD RELIGION's "How Could Hell Be Any Worse?" I just think of "the shittiness of reality" kind of thing.

J: Yeah, that's the thing. I wrote this whole riff on there, and he came up with this poem, which is sort of funny, 'cause he has this "Here's all this crappy crap, here's all this, this can't be utopia, look at this crap, this can't be utopia." But then at the end, we go, "You know something? This is all crap, but you can take charge of your life and build for tomorrow: make it a better world." At least control your world, or control what you can about your world.

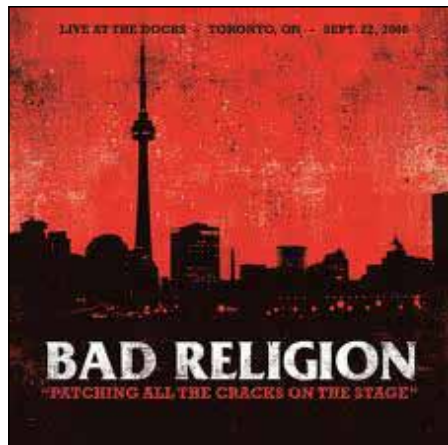
JZ: O.K., I remember that hook, 'cause I remember when Joel and I first started talking about trying to find the music that we could bring in here and make this thing happen, I remember, "Is the song 'Build for Tomorrow'?"

J: I go, "No, that's 'This Can't Be Utopia'." "No, no, that's not it." [laughs]

You did do other covers, you did a cover of the BEATLES, "Twist and Shout" ...

JZ: Which I had no recollection of until hearing this again.

J: That's kind of a funny one, 'cause we



do a pretty funny, we get down to the solo and we do it pretty accurately, we actually learned the song, right ...

JZ: I would've had to've sat down and learn the song.

J: ... we did "Skank and Shout," but the funniest thing, my funniest memory is doing that song at the Upper Lip ...

JZ: Opening for

DOA.

J: ... and DOA, Joey Shithead getting up on stage and singing it with us.

JZ: Coming out from backstage, when he should be warming himself up with DOA, coming out and singing along with this little punk-ass Toronto band, it was beautiful. It's what the pictures are from largely, the three scans that I sent you. The Upper Lip, opening for DOA. To me, that one and opening for ARTICLES OF FAITH, those were our big shows, our marquee shows.

I was at that show, 'cause I remember them coming out and doing a cover of "Singing in the Rain."

JZ: The DOA show at the Upper Lip? It was a good one for them 'cause it wasn't too big, too crazy; like, that one I have a poster here for tonight, like that was War on 45 and stuff, all these war songs? DOA was coming up with them, too, right? "Fucked Up Ronnie" and the War on 45 e.p. coming out, it was just prevalent.

But you guys said you did a cover of "Takin' ..." sorry.

J: Yeah, we did do a cover of "Takin' Care of Business," for sure.

JZ: I maintain—I've had this argument with Joey Shithead a couple of times over the years—that we did it first, and then they

heard us playing it at the Upper Lip and they decided to cover it too. And he's like, "We've been playing that song for like fifty years ..."

But you guys were talking about "Skank and Shout" that he was singing along with, not "Takin' Care of Business"?

JZ: But we did play "Takin' Care of Business" that night, too.

J: That was the sort of levity, we'd do those songs like "White Crosses," "Justice of the Green Berets," "Cash," and then we'd do "Skank and Shout" or a BTO song, and the funny thing about it was watching the punk-rock people go, "Yeah, punk rock group, taking the world seriously, yeah ... Oh! 'Skank and Shout'! Let's get up and ..." Or "BTO! Yeah!"

JZ: And QUIET RIOT, "Metal Health," which was very tongue in cheek because that was a fairly silly metal band, but I was completely and still am into it. I remember I took Paul to see JUDAS PRIEST at Maple Leaf Gardens, *Screaming for Vengeance* tour, or the next one—*Defenders of the Faith* tour was '84 or something like



that—and then he went later with dudes from a couple of other bands and saw IRON MAIDEN, which was that whole big pyramids Egyptian tour thing that they did back then. I mean, every weekend between Larry's Hideaway and the Turning Point, you had ten thousand metalheads coming out of Maple Leaf Gardens, every single weekend there was a metal show there at that time, OZZY and SABBATH and on and on and on.

J: It was sort of morphing at that time, too, hardcore bands, I remember CHRONIC SUBMISSION ...

JZ: Everybody got progressively more metal.

J: More metal. You learned how to play better, I guess: "Oh, yeah, I wanna do that riff, I wanna do that riff." And you got the MOTORHEAD thing coming, that sort of crossover was ...

JZ: MOTORHEAD was a huge crossover band between hardcore and metalheads.

**You were thinking roughly that DOA learned how to do BTO from you guys.**

JZ: Nahnahnah: that's my kick, and I'm sure Joey's right and I'm wrong and I'll admit it live on the radio, but it's a fun kind of thing to pull somebody's leg about. He's a big dude, so you can't pull it too far.

**The first time I ever heard them do a cover of it was 1986, so it was long after you guys were around. I actually have a recording of it I was going to play tonight, but we don't have time. It was at the RPM show; Rob Mallion gave me a copy of this recording.**

JZ: It's a very great song for any punk-rock band to cover.

**I wanted to ask you about some of the bands that you played with, because we haven't really touched enough on that. I heard you played with TSOL.**

JZ: Yep.

**Do you remember that show? When was it? Who else did you play with, or was it ...**

J: All I remember about TSOL, the first time—I think it was them, it was either them or ARTICLES OF FAITH—I do remember TSOL, they were like, they looked pretty ordinary, I think I saw them at the Turning Point ...

JZ: TSOL? Who's gonna know? It must have been Jill putting it on.

J: Yeah, it was the Turning Point. Them and ARTICLES OF FAITH were pretty close together, so I kind of mix them up, and TSOL, I remember them coming through, they were like real beefy guys, they were young beefy guys, and then they came back after tour six months later, and they'd all slimmed down, 'cause they'd sweat every



night playing hardcore every night. And I do remember TSOL the first time I saw them they were more real, and the next time I saw them they were kind of ...

**All glammed out.**

J: Yeah, yeah. It was kind of weird that way, all of a sudden they were serious about themselves.

**They had make-up credits on the back of the record, I remember.**

J: Yeah, they were being a lot more serious about themselves. You know, most bands, it's like, "Oh, they're great," and then, "Oh, they let me down."

**ARTICLES OF FAITH: was that at the Turning Point as well?**

JZ: ARTICLES OF FAITH at the Turning Point was freaking awesome.

**YOUNG LIONS were telling me about SUBVERTS and ARTICLES OF FAITH, that there was sort of this thing going on between Chicago and Toronto, some bands coming in from Chicago; Chicago was close enough for bands to play here.**

JZ: Yeah, yeah.

**ARTICLES OF FAITH, what were they like?**

JZ: Oh, intense. I remember them doing this song "Wait"—I posted it

on the whole Facebook thread about this show tonight—I can still see that singer's face doing their song "Wait"; for the longest time, they had this little piece of merch, it was just like a purple piece of fabric with ARTICLES OF FAITH in gold on it like you'd use to mark in your Bible, you know, your bookmark? And I had that thing, and I treasured it for years, I had it way longer than I had the music or any of these pictures or the stuff I brought in tonight. I don't know what happened to it, but I remember getting that at that show and just thinking that it was the coolest—I think they just gave them out, they just gave them away.

J: I didn't buy a lot of albums, 'cause I didn't have a lot of money, but I remember seeing them and then buying that album.

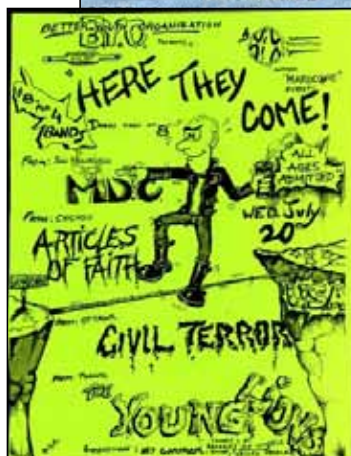
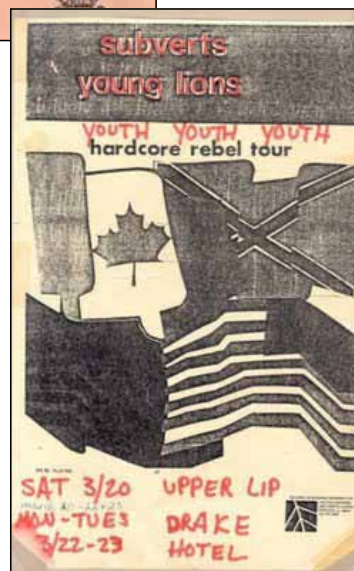
JZ: Vic Bondi, right, is the singer? Intense, intense. I don't always judge a hardcore band by an intense singer; usually I listen to what the guitar is doing ...

**There's a great documentary on Chicago: You Weren't There. You should see it: Vic Bondi's great in it.**

J: I just recall them being very tight and a very good band.

JZ: Yeah, they had the power, they had the sound, it was a good crowd at the Turning Point that night, we were totally stoked because we got to open for ... there were only a couple of times that we got to open for an out of town band, because that kind

of got rotated around, right? Sometimes it'd be us, sometimes it'd be CHRONICS. It was mostly always YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH or YOUNG LIONS, sometimes MICROEDGE, and sometimes APB: whoever got the luck of the draw mostly was it, you never really knew





when the call was gonna come, but that particular night was legendary, for sure.

### CHANNEL 3.

J: That was at Upper Lip.

JZ: No idea.

J: Yeah. We did a matinee show ...

### CHANNEL 3? They're from California, right?

J: Yeah, that was definitely at the Upper Lip. **That would've been a big show.**

J: It was packed. It was all ages, the matinee in the afternoon, and they did another one at night. We played the matinee.

JZ: Cool.

J: And I'm just trying to remember if I remember: Upper Lip, the stage used to be on that wall, and then they moved it to the other wall. When we played with DOA, they moved it to the far wall, towards Yonge Street ...

JZ: Yeah, it was at the front.

J: But that show it was across the wall that was kind of over toward the other one, there. So I just remember that one being—they were really big, there was a lot of skaters there, a lot of people there. It was a big one that way.

**On January 20, 1984, there was a two-night festival called Sound of Music that took place at the Turning Point. CREATIVE ZERO was on this bill, you played first night with BFG, CHRONIC SUBMISSION, MADHOUSE, and BLIBBER AND THE RAT CRUSHERS. What was the deal with this two-day show?**

JZ: Well, that was all gonna be part of *Not Dead Yet*. So the "Aggravated Assault" that was briefly up on YouTube—I wish it was allowed to come back because it was such big fun to see it—

J: I'm not allowed to see my own music anymore: apparently, someone else owns that. This whole, "Hey, think for yourself, let's share and share alike, do it yourself": apparently, there's still copyright involved later on.

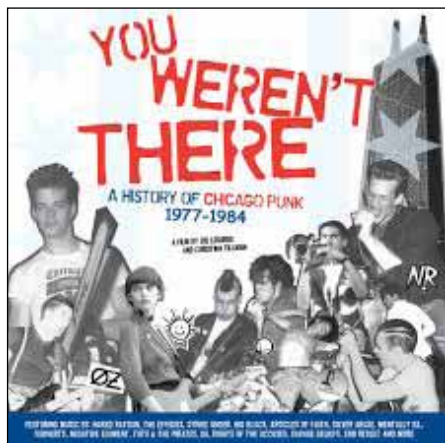
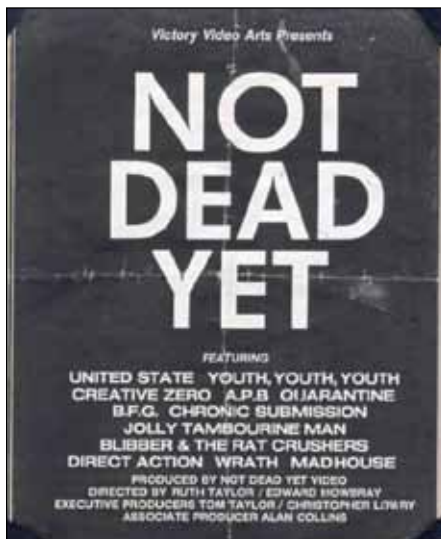
JZ: Ask Brian Taylor how he feels about that.

J: I thought music was for everyone.

JZ: But those shows brought out a big, big crowd: look at the pictures.

**I see: those are incredible pictures.**

JZ: You can pick people out, still: Anthony was there, and there are a couple other



he doesn't have now. The later, the Larry's one I don't remember.

**I remember it, and I remember it now that you're talking about the lights: I remember it for the lights, actually.**

JZ: Super big, bright lights.

J: I hated lights. As a drummer, I hated lights: they wilt you.

They put them so

close, shining on your head.

JZ: It didn't improve the mood or anything, but we were just really excited. We were, like, "We're gonna be in a movie."

J: Bambi wore a little yellow tutu, I think, for the BFG one there. I remember MADHOUSE, Richard Carstens was in that particular one. CHRONIC SUBMISSION, I remember them being small little kids with no hair.

JZ: See, this DISCHARGE t-shirt that I'm wearing here? I was trying to talk to Brian Taylor about this stuff: I remember buying t-shirts at this place, I remember it being Parliament and Shuter Street, and this place sold these homemade screens of punk-rock t-shirts you wouldn't get anywhere else, and it seems to me that that's where I got this DISCHARGE shirt. The MDC shirt, I would've only gotten from the show: that's the only place I could've gotten it, I think.

**I want to ask you about this film *Not Dead Yet*. I thought it was pretty lucky that Toronto had a film about the early hardcore scene.**

JZ: It would be even luckier if people could see it.

J: I thought it was very cool. These things happen, but especially in Toronto, we don't



capture it. Toronto was an integral part of the start of punk rock. There were four points: there was New York, there was England, and there was Toronto. It was right there, but nothing was documented.

JZ: There was a little bit, the early days, *The Last Pogo* and stuff like that.

J: Even that was after.

JZ: Hardcore, though: this is an incredible snapshot of early '80s hardcore, and a lot of that doesn't exist for any scene. So there was compilations, and there was records, but this is a lot of band footage, and a lot of people in the audience, too. If you were lucky and privileged enough to see the CREATIVE ZERO YouTube "Aggravated Assault" before it got yanked off, there's all kinds of crowd shots, and you can pick out all kinds of people.

**How did you come to be involved in this film?**

J: They filmed everyone.

JZ: They invited us; I remember being invited to do it, so I don't know if I was the connection or not.

J: It was very last minute, though: this particular show, I didn't know I was playing it until probably that day. They were, like, "Oh, you've gotta get down there, you're being filmed."

JZ: January '94, is that when this ...?

**'84.**

JZ: '84, of course.

J: I guarantee I was asked to pay at the show.

JZ: 'Cause you were in your black and white ...

J: I came down—I think I found out that day, and I was working, and they were, like, "Oh, we've got a show today, you've gotta be there: we're being filmed." I go, "We're being filmed?" "Yeah, we've gotta be there, we're playing." "O.K., you're on first: get down there." "O.K."

**O.K., so we've talked about the luckiness of having the film, but what kind of a job do you think they did of capturing the hardcore scene at the time?**

JZ: I remember—so, there was this filming, and then there was the second filming

benefit thing that was at Larry's. Then I remember that there was this release party or something ...

**I've heard of this: it was at the Cinesphere.**

JZ: Well, I don't know about the Cinesphere one, but I went to the Government—RPM at the time—

J: Were you invited?

JZ: There was UNITED STATE, the band was playing this showcase thing at RPM, and the film was supposed to be shown there as well. And I think they filmed more of themselves for this film at this RPM show. But I remember going being sort of pissed off, going, "They're not showing the movie. I came here to see the movie, and I'm not going to see the movie." I've never seen the movie; I haven't seen the whole thing.

J: I've seen it on TV. They released it once, it played on TV, and I saw it there. And I remember there used to be a place on Bathurst Street, After Dark Video had a copy of it, and I remember renting it once and watching it after that as well, and probably should have made a dub of it at that particular time.

JZ: Absolutely, 'cause there's no getting it now. It's on YouTube, anyway.

J: Did they capture the scene? Yeah, absolutely. It's all changed since then. Point a camera at it and captured it; sound was half decent.

**You do a song called "Aggravated Assault"—it's kind of what you're known for—what's the song about?**

J: It's about getting beat up by cops [laughs].

JZ: And nothin' but: pure and simple.

J: It's about the G20. No ...

**Is there a story behind this that happened to you guys or is related to the scene?**

J: We were never beat up by cops, but you always heard about the guy ...

**The Cherry Beach Express ...**

J: ... the Cherry Beach Express, and it was quite common: you'd be riding a bike, you'd get pulled over, they'd give you the once-over, and if you mouthed the wrong way ...

JZ: Shows at the Turning Point, being right on Bloor Street, the one thing that was not cool was to—but people would do it anyway—was to hang out on the sidewalk. Because you looked like punks; it wasn't the same Bloor Street that it is now, but still ...

J: Probable cause.

JZ: ... you've got all these shady-looking people hanging out on the sidewalk out front, and people probably had their own bottles and paper bags and whatever else,



smoking whatever else. So it was always trying to rush people off the street and inside the Turning Point, because if the cops ever came inside the Turning Point, that was bad news for everybody.

**It would be shut down.**

J: The piece of shiny tinsel, that makes them God.

JZ: O.K., Joel's gonna sing in the background while you play the track.

J: I'm just saying ...

**That's a lyric from the song.**

J: It was just about that: a guy ...

JZ: But if anyone was to get into trouble with the cops, it would have been Paul: he probably ran into them a couple times.

J: Yeah, I think he got hassled, and that's what inspired him to write the lyrics.

**Mystic was a label out in California, and they did a compilation of all anti-cop songs. There was a song on there in particular that stood out by WHITE FLAG called "Shattered Badge" which reminds me a lot of "Aggravated Assault."**

J: They stole it. We were first. Just kidding.

**I think there's a common theme running through punk scenes in North America, right?**

J: A common scene in any high school: a jock kid walking down the hall who's the prefect and is all of a sudden going to beat on the kid who's different because he's the law in town. It's like, who are these guys? They're not usually your brightest kids; it's not like your rocket scientists who are

gonna become a cop. It's some guy who's an average C student, and basically he was the kind of guy who you wanted to go, "Hey, man, be cool." And when he's not cool and he's in charge, you're in trouble because it can go to their head. And I'm not saying that that's everyone, and every cop, but it is some cops ...

JZ: It didn't require very much at all to get busted on a skateboard back then, either, I'll tell you that much.

**How many shows did you guys play in total? You said to me about twenty ...**

JZ: Maximum.

**O.K. What was the most memorable show that you guys played?**

JZ: For me, ARTICLES OF FAITH at the Turning Point, and DOA at Upper Lip.

J: Yeah, them; TSOL, and the CHANNEL 3 one was pretty cool at Upper Lip, there was a lot of people at that one.

JZ: It seems to me, our last show was at the Turning Point, and I remember shortly after that last show Reid English from MICROEDGE and SUDDEN IMPACT asked me to join SUDDEN IMPACT on the basis of CREATIVE ZERO's legacy and my guitar playing, which I'm not over to this day. And I remember that last show at the Turning Point, I think we played better than we ever did 'cause it was, like, swansong: we knew we were going out.

J: The Turning Point show ... so many things happened in so little time, it was sort of like this blur that all went together, so we could say "The Turning Point experience."

JZ: Any show at the Turning Point with CREATIVE ZERO was a great show, let's put it that way.

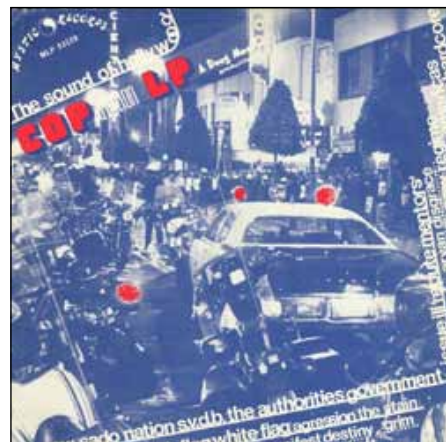
**It was a fun place to play. I never played there, but I saw lots of bands play there; it was a great place to see a show, and I agree with you. But if you knew that you were gonna break up, why did you**

**break up? What happened?**

JZ: "Let's take the summer off." And we never got back together: that's what happened.

J: There's always one guy in the band ...

**But you said you knew that it was the last show, so how did you know it was the last show?**







J: I'm the guy who would go, "Hey, we're practicing here next week." And you'd be the guy who'd go, "Hey, I got the next show," because you were connected. But I'd be the guy, "O.K., the next practice is here, the next practice is here, the next practice is here." And I think we got to a point where it was, like, I wasn't gonna call the next practice. And when the guy stops calling people for the next practice, then you never get together again. That's pretty well it.

JZ: To tell you the truth, I honestly have no recollection of it. I played one show between CREATIVE ZERO with some guys from PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE, we played one show at the Turning Point—I don't know if it was a benefit or what it was, we were together as a band for just that night, that one set, which there's a photo of, I'm very, very pleased, and you'd have to get Kent in here from PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE to relive that memory—and that was summer, 'cause I'm in shorts in the picture. And then by the fall I think I'd joined SUDDEN IMPACT on second guitar and was on to a whole new thing. And the band ended up, where SUDDEN IMPACT rehearsed was more or less rented by the ex-lead singer of MICROEDGE, and then Paul McNamney from CREATIVE ZERO lived in this house, too. So it became a new band house where people and bands came through and crashed and bands rehearsed in the basement.

J: It wasn't like we argued and said, "I hate you, we're never gonna play together." It was, like, "Hey, let's take the summer off, and we'll get back together in September."

**And that never happened.**

J: It never happened. We were all standing together going, "Great show, great time; so, yeah, we're gonna take the summer off aannnd ... we'll see you in the fall."

**What is the best way for people to get in touch with you guys if they want to find out about CREATIVE ZERO?**

J: Here. Through you.

**All right: I'll be the filter.**

J: We'll give them anything they want for free. If they like any of this music, they can have it for free. Just donate to CIUT.

*Thanks to Tim Freeborn for transcribing this interview.*

## SMASH IT UP

This issue came out in the fall of 1980. The editorial on the second mentions that this is the eighth issue to come out in the year so I imagine it would have been out in September or October. The cover is in Russian and in true Smash It Up fashion fills a need to play with the name of the publication. It was a provocative thing to do given that 1980 was the height of the Cold War being played out through a nuclear arms race. The zine plays up like a Russian issue that has been translated. The circulation of the zine was somewhere between 25 and 50 copies and was sold for \$0.20 a copy. This issue can be downloaded from our blog at <http://equalizingxdistort.blogspot.ca/1980/10/zine-smash-it-up.html>



This issue starts out with an interview with Gary Numan at the Holiday Inn, which was more like a shrug off. On the same page is a playlist and a list of new releases that had just come out. The next feature is a piece on heavy metal with brief descriptions of bands like Sabbath and Priest and Saxon and KISS. The next piece is about a band named the Civilians and they were about to release a record on Star Records (the label that put out the first Forgotten Rebels LP). The Garys thought they were too metal so they never booked them. There was an interview with the Demics just after the album had been released. One of the big concerns by that record gets asked which is about the album sounding too overproduced. There is a piece on the Sharks that took four attempts to get. The interviewer spent some time trying to interview the band (four times) and there are some answers but different members in some of those times. But at the end the interview read a bit like the Tyranna interview that followed. I liked the Tyranna interview better. There is a review section on punk films and one of those was a showing of a film named Crash 'n Burn about the club in Toronto that was shown in an art gallery. There was reviews of "D.O.A.", "Punking Out", "The Great Rock 'n Roll Swindle" and some reggae films like "The Harder they Come" and "Dread, Beat and

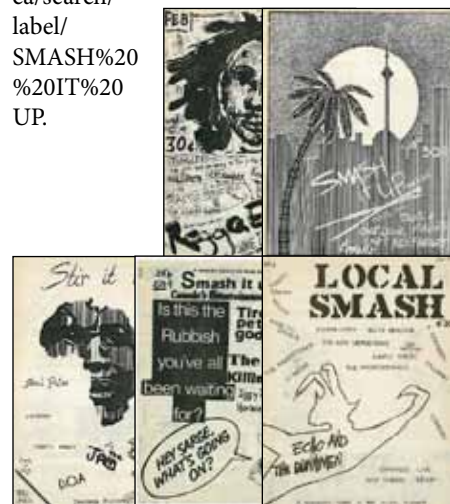


Blood". There is also a big piece on a film which had the Clash in it called "Preacher Man". There is also some great record reviews which includes one of the Talking Heads "Remain in Light". The back cover had a neat poster photo of a band named the Feds that promotes a new single and a show for November at the Edge. This issue can be downloaded from our blog at <http://equalizingxdistort.blogspot.ca/1980/10/zine-smash-it-up.html>

This issue is about politics, and came out in November 1980. It starts out with an article on the KKK trying to start up a chapter in Toronto and the writer calls for a media blackout of the organization.

This article is followed by a piece on Rock Against Racism which looked at how the organization evolved in Toronto. They mentioned the English roots to the organization with bands like Elvis Costello and Gang of Four and the Specials and the Clash. And then there was references to local punk bands like the Sharks who write a tribute to Albert Johnson called "Metro's Number one Problem". And Young Lions had a sing with the lyrics "One little nazi is one too many". There is an interview with the leader of the Young Communist League of Canada, Sylvie Baillargeon. There is a piece on Leon Trotsky. And there is a note about a cancellation of a Clash gig and Maple Leaf Gardens that Teenage Head was supposed to play. This issue can be downloaded from our blog at <http://equalizingxdistort.blogspot.ca/1980/11/zine-smash-it-up-november-1980.html>.

There are five more issues found on our blog at <http://equalizingxdistort.blogspot.ca/search/label/SMASH%20%20IT%20UP>.





**This is what happened to the last drunk that was left in charge**



**But the guy who runs this town**

